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Editor's Introduction

Susan Shell

One of the persistent puzzles of Strauss scholarship is the absence in any of his published works of a thematic treatment of Immanuel Kant.ⁱ This absence is all the more striking given Kant's importance in shaping the intellectual milieu in which the younger Strauss was educated and against which he, along with many of his early intellectual companions, including Gerhard Krüger, Jacob Klein, Gershom Scholem and others, rebelled more or less explicitly. And it gives the two seminars that he dedicated to Kant in 1958 and 1967 (an additional seminar given in the early 1950's was evidently not recorded)ⁱⁱ special importance for anyone wishing to better grasp Strauss's understanding and appraisal of Kant's thought, including the meaning of that relative public silence.

Before we turn directly to the transcripts of those two seminars, it will prove helpful to briefly consider that milieu along with Strauss's approach to Kant both before and in the aftermath of Strauss's so-called "reorientation" in the early 1930's. Strauss was born in 1899 in Kirchhain, Germany and grew up in an observant Jewish family. He attended a local gymnasium and then studied at the University of Marburg, which at that time was dominated by a neo-Kantianism for which Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) served as the shaping intellectual force. Strauss's dissertation, written under the supervision of Ernst Cassirer at the University of Hamburg, on the "problem of knowledge" in Jacobi was a thinly veiled critique of Cassirer's neo-Kantianism.ⁱⁱⁱ

The neo-Kantianism that dominated the academic world of Strauss's youth represented a peculiar strand of Kantianism, one that took for granted the validity of modern empirical science as a basic starting point while at the same time insisting, with Kant, that scientific truth applied only to the realm of "appearances," leaving the way open for moral claims to "practical knowledge" of things in themselves. In this view the gap between theory and practice, or between natural science and ethics, was spanned by the "regulative" idea of a progressive history, culminating, for Cohen, in a democratic-socialist state (or multitude of states) infused with broadly liberal and humanitarian principles.

ⁱ The sole exception is his early dissertation on Jacobi, which includes an extensive treatment of Kant from the perspective of Jacobi's critique. See Strauss, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der philosophischen Lehre Fr. H. Jacobis* (1921) in Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2: *Philosophie und Gesetz—Frühe Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2nd ed., 2013), 237-92.

ⁱⁱ Strauss seems also to have offered a course on "Aristotle and Kant" at the New School in 1944, which was attended by Harry Jaffa. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/396209/house-jaffa-john-j-miller>

ⁱⁱⁱ For Strauss's youthful assessment of Cassirer, whom he later described as a "remarkable representative of established academic philosophy," see RCPR 28. (For a list of title abbreviations, see the end of this introduction.)

A major difference between Cohen and Cassirer was the relative eclipse for the latter of a binding moral law, and with it the specific importance of a rational ethics that tended to merge in Cassirer's thought with other sciences of "culture." A further, and perhaps related, difference lay in Cohen's passionate concern for the future of Judaism and the Jews in the context of modernity and in the waning years of Imperial Germany [WIPP 292-6].

One might begin to better understand Strauss's attitude toward Kant by examining Strauss's several extended treatments of Cohen from the period of his early engagement with political Zionism to his late Introduction to Cohen's *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism* that Strauss chose to include as the final chapter of *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, the original version of which appeared in 1973, the year of Strauss's death.

To briefly summarize that evolving treatment: Cohen seems to represent to Strauss the peak of Jewish hopes for successful accommodation—intellectual, political, and social—within a progressive civilization partly grounded in Kantian liberal presuppositions. Initially and throughout, Strauss takes Cohen to task for certain unfounded humanitarian expectations (which in some ways exceed those of Kant himself) while at the same time respectfully acknowledging Cohen's own religiously rooted dissatisfaction with idealistic and romantic understandings of "transcendence." In the spirit of Kant's ethics as he understood them, Cohen attempted to reverse, on Kantian premises and by Kantian means, the "euthanasia" of Judaism^{iv} that Kant had himself appropriated from Spinoza. If Cohen failed to recognize the political motives behind Spinoza's "amazingly unscrupulous" treatment of Judaism (though not, perhaps, of the Jewish people), and if Cohen thereby also failed to recognize the impossibility of a politically effective moral universalism, he exceeded the putative intellectual accomplishment of his successor, Cassirer, by revealing perhaps more forcefully than Kant himself the necessary link between the passionate longing for universal justice and belief in revelation (PAW 140, NRH 163-4; cf. L. Batinsky, "Kant's Philosophy of Religion," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)(<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/strauss-leo>).

Strauss's youthful Zionist essays make clear his early doubts as to the adequacy of such faith in the possibility of universal justice as a guide to political life or action. The aftermath of World War One, along with the increasingly precarious situation of the Jews in Germany and the related revelation of the illusory and demeaning character of the assimilationist ideal, made political Zionism an attractive option to many. Strauss's own complex attitude toward Zionism, an attitude he would later associate with the name of Nietzsche as he then understood him,^v saw in Kant the roots of an unmanly liberal idealism and romanticism that refused to face the harsh reality of a world divided among political communities that were always at least potentially mutually hostile. One motive for Strauss's early studies of Spinoza was to free his persona from the German Idealists'

^{iv} Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* [6: 517-18].

^v See his letter to Karl Löwith, June 23, 1935 [GS 3: 648] and Strauss, "Preface to the English Translation," *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E. M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken, 1963, 3-5).

and Romantics' image of a "god-intoxicated man," an image that had led contemporary liberal Jews to embrace Spinoza as a Jewish hero and thus "reverse" his original Jewish excommunication. Cohen's own better moral instincts led him instead to decry Spinoza as a traitor to his people, but Cohen's own Kantian assumptions as to the basically moral foundations of philosophy blinded him to what Maimonides's "Platonism" really meant and thereby prevented Cohen from raising the fundamental Platonic-Socratic question as to the right way of life.

Strauss's *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, which was written during the years 1926-28, developed an early suspicion on his part that modern liberal thought, and the philosophic assumptions on which it was based, had failed to do justice to the claims of revelation, as recently affirmed by Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten, and other members of the "neo-Orthodox" school. A related trend—the so-called "new thinking," which included both Franz Rosenzweig, who urged a modified return to Jewish orthodoxy, and Martin Heidegger, who was assumed to be an atheist—likewise stressed the "existential" character of certain fundamental human experiences to which religion traditionally gave expression, and for which neither natural science nor the contemporary sciences of "culture" could satisfactorily account.

It is here that Gerhard Krüger enters the scene. Krüger, who was both a follower of Bultmann and Heidegger's respected research assistant, was embarked on his own effort to recover the Socratic-Platonic question, albeit from the standpoint of a pre-modern Christian Platonism. His discerning and incisive review of Strauss's Spinoza book (one that stated Strauss's views, as Strauss put it, more clearly than he had done)^{vi} sparked an extended correspondence and intellectual friendship that included the crucial years that spanned Strauss's so-called reorientation (in the late 1920's-early 1930's) and survived the difficult Hitler years, definitively ending only with Krüger's unfortunate stroke in the early 1950's.^{vii} Krüger's way back to Plato was via an original and painstaking reading of Kant that especially emphasized his neo-Platonic Christian roots. On Krüger's account, modern science was less the foundation of Kant's critical idealism than an intellectual impediment that prevented him from entering fully into the spirit of knowing belief to which his deeper thinking pointed. Krüger's interpretation of Kant impressed Strauss at the time and would continue to inform his reading of Kant as presented in his later seminars (see, for example, 1958 seminar, sessions 3, 6).^{viii}

^{vi} Gerhard Krüger, review of Leo Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinoza als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1930), in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 1931, Heft 51 (December 20), 2407-2412. See also Leo Strauss, "Preface" to *Hobbes Politische Wissenschaft*, trans. Donald Maletz, *Interpretation*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January, 1979), 2.

^{vii} Leo Strauss [GS 3: 377-454].

^{viii} Strauss also mentions Krüger appreciatively, albeit with reservations, in his 1959 seminar on Plato's *Symposium*. See Leo Strauss, *On Plato's Symposium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Thomas L. Pangle, "The Light Shed on the Crucial development of Strauss's Thought by his Correspondence with Gerhard Krüger," in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in 1930s*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 58.

Krüger and Strauss shared a fundamental antipathy for modern relativistic assumptions that made it impossible to take seriously the question of the best life or of the “one thing needful.”^{ix} At the same time, Krüger’s fundamentally Christian response, in Strauss’s view, remained within an “historicizing” horizon that Strauss himself meant to get beyond. A poignant letter on the far side of Strauss’s intellectual breakthrough of 1929–30 stresses the difference between “natural law,” to whose commanding authority Krüger remained wedded, and natural right as Plato understood it. Krüger’s failure to follow that hint marked the end of their close intellectual collaboration, though not their friendship, and it reveals, as we shall see, something important about the defects, as Strauss saw them, of Kant’s overall approach, even when stripped of its general commitment to the basic premises of modern natural science.

Julius Ebbinghaus, whose lively lectures on Hobbes Strauss later praised for helping to foster his own appreciation for the reading of “old books,” was and remained a devoted Kantian, albeit one with a particular interest in Kant’s juridical philosophy. Ebbinghaus’s appointment as Rector of Marburg University in 1946 testifies to his unwavering, if passive, opposition to Nazism during the war years (in marked contrast with such figures as Heidegger and Gogarten) and may shed light on the intellectual and moral qualities that led Strauss to include him, along with Krüger, among the few who shared Strauss’s newly-won conviction that recovery of the ability to inquire directly about the truth without the self-defeating assumptions of “historical consciousness” would require ascent from what amounted to a “second cave.”^x In any case, Strauss’s acquaintance with Ebbinghaus gave Strauss personal access to an intellectually rigorous perspective on Kant’s thought that in emphasizing Kant’s significant if seemingly unlikely debt to Hobbes differed from those of Krüger^{xi} and the neo-Kantians.^{xii}

As for that further interest: in his early “On the Argument with European Science” written for the Zionist journal *Das Jude* [1924], Strauss had complained that Kant, by providing a means of peaceful coexistence between science and religious tradition “on parallel planes,” had eliminated or obscured their “life-and-death struggle for hegemony on the *single* plane of the ‘truth’”:

Religion was saved not by its own defense, but rather by the self-critique of the critique. Kant “needed to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.” In the context of this self-critique, religion was saved at the price of an idealist, romantic

^{ix} Thus their shared contempt for the work of Karl Mannheim, whom Strauss satirizes in his 1929 essay “Conspicuousness,” which he sought Krüger’s help in publishing. An English translation of the essay appears in *Reorientation*, 217–24.

^x A reference to Plato’s famous “cave” allegory in the *Republic* (514a–520a). On Ebbinghaus in this regard, see Strauss’s letter to Krüger of 15 October 1931 [GS 3: 393–395] and his 1931 review of Ebbinghaus’s *On the Progress of Metaphysics* in *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings (1921–1932)*, trans. and ed. Michael Zank (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 214–15.

^{xi} See in this regard Strauss’s later references to Ebbinghaus at (1958, sessions 10, 15).

^{xii} On Kant’s ongoing openness to interpretations other than a neo-Kantian one, see 1958, sessions 3, 10; on Krüger’s own linkage of Kant with Hobbes, see Strauss’s letter of June 28, 1931.

interpretation. However, the more the science of religion (now no longer in need of *criticizing* religion) devoted itself to the concrete actuality of religion, the clearer it became that the claim to transcendence, which . . . was endangered by romanticism and which is the ultimate claim of the specific claim to truth of religion, is also the vital principle of religion. [LSEW, 109]

Strauss's early insight into the price of Kant's defense of religion—one that robbed religion of its appeal to a transcendent truth that could compete directly with the claim of natural science—continued to inform both certain reservations with respect to Cohen,^{xiii} and his interest in the work of Krüger, whose own early book on Kant brought to light a transcendent religious dimension that neo-Kantian interpretations tended to ignore. Neo-Calvinists like Barth, on Strauss's view, represented an understandable and in some ways healthy reaction to an idealizing and romantic religiosity whose God was little more than a human projection of liberal-humanitarian hopes. Their appeal to the immediate experience of an omnipotent and demanding God, beyond human understanding, exposed the intellectual self-complacency that underlay the so-called "science of religion" that accompanied those hopes. At the same time, in its emphasis on the "concrete situation of the present" at the expense of the tradition, that appeal remained exposed to Heidegger's "atheistic" interpretation of the "call of conscience," opening the door to a more radical understanding of human historicity. Here Cohen's rootedness in the Jewish understanding of divine law served as a useful corrective to the Christian natural law tradition to which Protestant neo-orthodoxy remained hostage willy nilly. And it sheds useful light on Strauss's estimation of the strengths and limits of Kant, Cohen's divergence from whom on just this point Strauss goes out of his way to emphasize.

Strauss treats in greater detail the difference between Christian medieval philosophy on the one hand, and Jewish and Islamic medieval philosophy on the other, in a lecture on "Cohen and Maimonides" delivered in late April 1931, according to a nearly contemporaneous letter to Gerhard Krüger dated May 7.^{xiv} That he had written to Krüger one year earlier (3 May 1930) with a friendly "plea" to be allowed to give a lecture in the

^{xiii} In "On the Argument with European Science" [GS 2: 341-350], originally published in *Der Jude*, 8:10 (October 1924), 613-619] Strauss claims to discover in Cohen a more genuine religious motivation than is initially evident, given his apparent reduction of religion to social ethics: when neo-orthodox Protestants complain that the "entire science of religion has been devised without paying heed to religion" they forget, if they thereby have Cohen in mind, that "the entire context of Cohen's philosophic system rests on religious presuppositions," in marked contrast with an apparent acolyte like Cassirer, for whom, "in a typically idealistic manner," the world of myth "loses its 'compulsory' character of human beings insofar as it is read as the mind's own product. Cohen's polemic against myth differs from that of Cassirer in being guided not by an idealistic celebration of "the autonomous human spirit," but by the non-idealist, and genuinely ethical question "to what end?" "In Cohen," as Strauss goes on to say, "the ethical motive of transcendence contains within it . . . the power and depth of the religious motive of transcendence." "In the concrete context of human existence, the transcendence of the Ought in relation to Being, demands by its very nature, as Cohen stated again and again, that ethics be further developed into religion" [LSEW 109-10, 114].

^{xiv} It is not known how much of the text contained in the rather lengthy extant manuscript was actually delivered. See the editor's note, LSM 173.

latter's Augustine seminar on "Enlightenment in the Middle Ages" with a specific view to "Jewish and Islamic developments" suggests the intensity of his focus on this theme around this time. As Strauss puts it in his earlier letter in addressing what he calls "the problem of the moderate (i.e., non-atheistic) enlightenment" (about which Strauss here claims that Krüger's Kant work taught Strauss "a great deal"):

From an external viewpoint, the situation in the Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages is similar to that of the eighteenth century: prevalence of belief in Providence, prevalence of belief in a gracious God over belief in a God who demands accountability, and *accordingly* belief in the sufficiency of reason. Upon closer inspection, however, there are significant differences. In the eighteenth century, there is the primacy of morality (veneration of Socrates), in the Middle Ages there is the primacy of theory.

Strauss here traces that difference to the peculiar role that "natural law" plays in Christianity as distinguished from Judaism and Islam. As Strauss immediately goes on to say:

In the eighteenth century, the "moral law" is developed as a natural right that demands the supplement of a positive, civil law. Natural law does not play a role in Jewish-Arabic philosophy, at least not the role that it has in the course of Christian development. This is connected with the fact that for Jews and Arabs, the positive law is at once both political and "church" law. The positive law of Moses or Mohammed is the *one* binding norm that suffices to lead a life directed toward a (theoretically existing) blessedness. Moses or Mohammed are understood as philosopher-legislators. The presupposition for this is the idea that goes back to the Platonic state. The Jewish-Arabic Middle Ages are thus much more "ancient" than the eighteenth century. By connecting to the ancient ideas of a concrete *nomos* and *nomothetes*, it is also far more capable of accepting the concrete revelatory order than the natural-law focus of the eighteenth century.

Though he does not quite say so, the Jewish and Islamic Middle Ages are also, from this point of view, more "ancient" than the Christian Middle Ages, which introduces a gap between natural and positive law unknown to Plato and of which Kant, along with the entire modern natural right tradition, is a late, if unwitting, inheritor.

This early allusion to Strauss's own breakthrough insight into the possibility of an enlightenment founded upon different and more adequate premises than that which flourished in the eighteenth century is confirmed in his contemporaneous report to Krüger that in that lecture Strauss had for "for the first time" given public voice to his "thesis about Islamic-Jewish scholasticism (that it understands revelation through the framework staked out in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*)."

In a passage toward the end of the text that is particularly relevant for our purposes, Strauss writes by way of summary:

The idea [Gedanke] of law, of *nomos*, is what unifies Jews and Greeks: the idea of the *concrete*, binding order of life [verbindlichen Ordnung des Lebens], which is

covered over for us by the Christian and the natural-right tradition, this idea [is the one] under whose spell [Bann] at least our philosophical thought moves. By the *Christian* tradition: [I mean the one] that starts out with the radical law *critique* of the Apostle Paul. By the *natural-right* tradition: [I mean the one] that stipulates an *abstract* system of norms which must first be filled [ausgefüllt] and made serviceable by *positive* right. Cohen himself puts us on the road to the recovery of this basic concept of mankind/humanity [Grundbegriffs der Menschheit], by replacing the viewpoint of disposition/intention [Gesinnung]^{xv} with that of action [Handlung], by orienting his ethics fundamentally to jurisprudence, by which he teaches that there is no self-consciousness [das es kein Selbstbewusstsein gibt] “that is to be achieved without regard for the state and without guidance through the idea of the state, in [all of] which he is by being a *political philosopher* filled [erfüllt] with political passion. [2: 429; LSM 221]

In what may be his earliest public use of the term “political philosophy,”^{xvi} Strauss points both to the limitations of Kant, and to the resources that allowed Cohen, for all his socialist-humanitarian susceptibilities, to dispel the “Bann” under which modern political thought continues to labor. The term “Bann” signifies both “spell” and “ban,” as in “ban of excommunication.” And there can be little doubt that Strauss means that religious note to register. Cohen regards his subject from the standpoint of “action” rather than “disposition” or *Gesinnung*, a Kantian term of art that is the direct descendant of the biblical-Augustinian demand for “purity of heart.” At the same time, Cohen’s own concrete political passion counters the narrowness of his Kantian conception of ethics, reorienting him despite himself away from the abstract conception of self-consciousness that informs modern philosophy from its beginning. Self-consciousness for Cohen is unthinkable without a burdened awareness of the concrete laws that accompany a specific way of life – i.e., what Strauss will later call a “awareness of sacred restraints.”^{xvii} In this crucial instance, Cohen, despite his general intellectual commitment to Kantianism, strays beyond Kant’s own reliance on a “transcendental dialectic” based wholly in “theoretical consciousness” [SCR 37]. On the basis of that dialectic, Kant had tried to “limit knowledge in order to make room for faith,” thereby rendering religion immune to scientific criticism. He thereby lifted science and religion to “separate planes” in which genuine conflict seems to be impossible in principle. Cohen’s grounding of metaphysics “in the context of [his] religion” brings them back into alignment on a single plane of inquiry. His “passion” on behalf of his own people and related understanding of the

^{xv} Cf. 1958 seminar, session 4.

^{xvi} For the fullest explicit discussion, see “What is Political Philosophy?,” 9-55. In “Cohen and Maimonides,” Strauss already stresses the necessary ambiguity of the term. For an alternative account, see Rodrigo Chacon, “Reading Strauss from the Start: on the Heideggerian Origins of ‘Political Philosophy,’” *European Journal of Political Theory* 9 (2010): 287-307. Chacon, in my view, draws much too sharp a distinction between Strauss’s early and later uses of the term. On the continuity of Strauss’s usage, see especially his interest at this time in Lessing, and especially the dialogue “Ernst and Falk.” See Strauss, “A Remembrance of Lessing” (1937), [2: 607-8]; “Esoteric Teaching” (1939); cf. “Reason and Revelation,” LSTPP, 178-9.

^{xvii} Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press. 1991), 192.

original meaning of divine law point toward what Strauss had earlier called a metaphysics that is “by origin *more* than pure theory,” toward the “extra something” that “throws a bridge between science and religion” and thereby makes the scientific (i.e., genuinely philosophic) criticism of religion again possible [1: 66, SCR 37].

This impression as to the historical importance, as Strauss sees it, of the divergent medieval approaches to the law is confirmed in a subsequent letter to Krüger, in which he gently corrects Krüger’s identification of “natural law” with natural right in a genuinely Platonic (and Aristotelean) sense.

At the same time, Strauss’s ongoing efforts to recover the possibility of a non-Epicurean theoretical alternative, an alternative that he seems to have associated from an early date with Plato, informed Strauss’s first extended treatment of Hobbes, in which the shadow of Kant is not hard to discern.^{xviii} Like his contemporary Descartes, Hobbes seeks to shield men from the discomfiting possibility of a wholly arbitrary and omnipotent God by beginning with what man can assure himself of with certainty: in Descartes’s case, the perceived necessity contained in self-reflective thought; in Hobbes’s case, the felt necessity of the world’s resistance.^{xix} Kant’s “transcendental dialectic,” it would seem, combines these two insights while at the same time incorporating their joint indifference or blindness to the fact that while *knowledge* of the acts of an omnipotent God (i.e., “miracles”) might be thus foreclosed (i.e., by defining “knowledge” in an especially narrow way) the sheer *possibility* of miracles was not. Given Strauss’s project at the time, this limitation on Kant’s part would have been enough to convince Strauss, even before the breakthrough inspired by his reading of Alfarabi and Maimonides in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, that Kant’s philosophy, whatever other interest it might hold, was theoretically speaking a dead end.^{xx}

In sum: Strauss’s early appreciation for Kant’s thought was more complex than can be captured by the word “rejection,” nor was he as unsympathetic as might appear from his

^{xviii} See, for example, his letter to Krüger of Oct 15, 1931.

^{xix} On Kant’s relation to Descartes, see also 1958 seminar, session 12: Kant, as Strauss there puts it, “wants morality to apply equally to God” in order to “secure us against any theological objections to the perfect sovereignty of man,” i.e., to leave us not “unprotected . . . against God” by establishing a sphere of uniquely human responsibility in which “no God, however powerful, can have power over man.” 1958 seminar, sessions 10, 12. Strauss’s analysis seems to draw partly on Krüger’s own early essay on Descartes, which Strauss praises in his letter of 12 May 1935. Cf. Krüger, “Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins,” *Logos* 22 (1933); an English translation (“The Origin of Philosophical Self-Consciousness”) was published in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (2007), 209-59.

^{xx} In a final, and perhaps unsent, letter to Krüger (his correspondence with whom would not resume until June 1958), Strauss grants that he is now far more willing to concede Krüger’s view that “Kant is really the only Platonist among the modern philosophers.” At the same time, Strauss also holds the “Christian tradition” to task for the “main deficiencies of traditional conceptions of Plato—even in today’s research”—an allusion, it would seem, to Heidegger as much as to Krüger, who continues to be more “convinced” that “historicity as such is a philosophic problem” than is Strauss (thanks to his own discovery of a path back to Plato via Alfarabi). Letter of Dec. 25, 1935 (unsent draft). For a late discussion of Kant’s “Platonism,” see 1967 seminar, session 7.

very early dissertation on Jacobi, a particularly influential contemporary critic of Kant.^{xxi} Indeed, it would be only a slight exaggeration to say that Kant, as differently interpreted by Cohen, Krüger, and Ebbinghaus, provided Strauss with the *motif* that led him to undertake serious studies of both Spinoza and Hobbes with a view to uncovering the ultimate roots of modern liberal thought. That Kant's moral appropriation of medieval natural law could make him seem to be a "Christian" at heart while remaining in most other respects a "modern" might well have prompted Strauss, himself intent on making the ascent from modernity's "second cave," to seek out other, non-Christian pre-modern sources, in which "natural law" featured less prominently, if at all—sources that would in turn guide his own re-orientation.

But there was to be a "third act" of theoretical engagement with Kant's thought, following upon the "shipwreck" that Strauss refers to in a 1946 letter Karl Lowith,^{xxii} and that culminated in a renewed grappling with the challenge of revelation as posed by Kierkegaard and his neo-orthodox followers.^{xxiii} According to this new formulation, the significant alliance was not Alfarabi and Maimonides against Aquinas (on the nature of law) but Judaism and Catholicism against radical Reformation Protestantism (on the nature of faith) [LSTPP, 177]. Strauss presents that challenge in a paper on "Reason and Revelation" delivered at the Hartford Seminary in 1948, which culminates in a complex and highly condensed dialogue between the competing claims of philosophy and revelation to represent "the one thing needful."^{xxiv} That these claims are, indeed, mutually exclusive as well as jointly comprehensive is the concluding theme of that essay, and it involves setting to rest an argument—one that Strauss here links with Kant—that reconciles reason and revelation by denying revelation and philosophy or science a common plane of dispute, an argument that ultimately proves devastating to philosophy itself. For—as Strauss goes on to assert—so long as the philosopher cannot

^{xxi} For a thorough account of Strauss's qualified debt to Jacobi, see David Janssens, "The Problem of the Enlightenment: Strauss, Jacobi, and the Pantheism Controversy," in *Reorientation: Leo Strauss in the 1930's*, ed. Martin Jaffe and Richard S. Ruderman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

^{xxii} See Meier, LSTPP, 29; cf. WIPP 78-94 (cited in Shell, CCS, 192n). Accordingly, as he puts it in an accompanying note, Strauss "find[s himself] compelled" to change his work plans, which presumably included a previously outlined book, to be "tentatively entitled *Philosophy and Law: Selected Essays*," which was devoted to the subject of esotericism and was to culminate with a chapter on the "Pantheism" controversy. Strauss's subsequent treatments of the history of natural right no longer link, in the manner of his earlier writings, the Christian understanding of natural law with the emergence of historicism, now presented as the culminating moment of the three "waves" of modernity initiated by Machiavelli.

^{xxiii} While Strauss mentions both Bultmann and Gogarten, he focuses on the Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, from whose *Reason and Revelation* (1946; original German edition 1941), Strauss quotes at some length (and whose title he both imitates and, in order to "clarify the issue," implicitly corrects [LSTPP 141]). On Brunner, see also Strauss's November 26, 1946 letter to Lowith [3: 671]. For a fuller discussion of Strauss's treatment of neo-orthodoxy, see Daniel Tanguay, *Strauss: an Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 145-66).

^{xxiv} Cf. *Luke* 10: 41-2.

rule out the possibility of revelation, philosophy becomes something “infinitely unimportant” and hence indefensible on its own terms.

Without entering into the details of Strauss’s argument, which at times verges on the fragmentary, one cannot help noticing the importance of Kant’s role both in placing science and revelation onto separate planes between which dispute, and hence refutation, is no longer possible (a key theme of Strauss’s work in the late 1920’s, as we have seen), and in furthering the modern obfuscation of the primary moral and political phenomena that ultimately gives rise to radical historicism.^{xxv} So long as philosophy confines itself to the argument that the “fact of revelation” cannot be known as such (i.e., that *knowledge* of miracles is impossible, but not miracles themselves), revelation can reply that this tacitly presupposes the identity of “being” with “evidently knowable.” “It is *this* fact,” as Strauss here puts it, “which gave rise to Kant’s Critique of pure reason, to his distinction between the phenomenon and the Thing-in-itself: Kant’s ‘idealism’ is an *attack* on the ‘idealism’ of classical philosophy.” Were we to leave matters here, the consequence for philosophy would be a “radical revision of fundamental reflections of classical philosophy . . . along the lines of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason” [LSTPP 177].^{xxvi}

That Strauss does not leave matters here but presses on to assert that (pace Kant) philosophy and revelation *do* make claims about actual things, thus opening revelation to the possibility of refutation, underscores the fundamental weakness of the Kantian strategy: philosophy and revelation cannot be assigned separate spheres or planes inasmuch as “they make assertions about the *same* subject: about the world and human life” [LSTPP 171]. Kierkegaard and his followers defended their faith in the only way remaining:

To *exclude* the possibility of refutation radically, there is only one way: that faith has no basis whatever in human knowledge of actual things. This view of faith is not the Jewish and the Catholic one. It was prepared by the Reformers and reached its climax in Kierkegaard. [LSTPP 177]

Strauss’s longstanding objection to the Kantian strategy of separate spheres is here sharpened by an encounter with Kant’s existentialist legacy. To defend faith more adequately even than Kant (who cancelled knowledge in order to make room for faith), Kierkegaard’s “knight of faith” no longer grounds his belief in worldly knowledge of any kind, with the sole exception of the fact that some individuals once believed that “God appeared among [them]. . . , lived and died” [LSTPP 178; cf. 156]. But even Kierkegaard (and perhaps especially he) falls victim no less than Kant to what Strauss here calls the “*basic* fallacy, of faith,” namely, “the attribution of *absolute* importance to *morality* (the

^{xxv} On Strauss’s understanding of both the genealogy and the importance of this obfuscation see his essay on Collingwood [*Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 559-586].

^{xxvi} There is some question as whether these notes properly belong to the period in which he composed “Reason and Revelation,” or, instead, to Strauss’s earlier lecture on “Jerusalem and Athens” which was delivered in November 1946, much closer to the date of his “shipwreck” letter to Löwith. (I am very grateful to David Bolotin and Peter Hansen for drawing my attention to this issue.)

pure heart)” [177].^{xxvii} Strauss leaves matters at the suggestion that it is here that the “bridge,” as he once called it, linking philosophy and revelation genuinely lies; i.e., in a consideration of those primary moral and political phenomena from which classical political philosophy itself first emerged.

We are now in a better position to take up the two Kant courses for which transcripts are available.^{xxviii} Both courses cover more readings from a greater variety of works than is common in Strauss’s seminars, no doubt signaling a general conviction on his part that Kant’s political philosophy could be properly approached only given some understanding of his thought as a whole. In each course Strauss is concerned both with the genesis of Kant’s thought—with particular emphasis on the decisive influence of both Hume and Rousseau—and with the meaning or intention of Kant’s work from Kant’s own point of view. And in each he makes glancing, yet telling, allusions to Kant’s legacy especially as it pertains to existentialism, both Kierkegaardian and Heideggerian (1958 seminar, sessions 4, 16; 1967 seminar, sessions 3, 8, 17).

The overt topic of both courses is the status of Kant’s philosophy of history, which “as it were, raises its head at the gates of Kant’s thought, and yet . . . does not get a proper entry” (1958 seminar, session 3; 1967 seminar, sessions 1, 2). Whereas in *Natural Right and History* Kant figures as little more than a way station between Rousseau and a full-fledged philosophy of history, Strauss pauses in his seminars to explicitly consider why Kant himself did not take this step. The simple answer is the availability, within Kant’s critical system, of the morally more satisfactory alternative represented by the two postulates of pure practical reason—namely, belief in God and in the immortality of the soul. That Kant is drawn toward a philosophy of history nonetheless mainly arises from certain peculiarities of his understanding of morality, which are themselves largely rooted in the influence of Rousseau, a theme Strauss had more fully explored in “On the

^{xxvii} Compare, in this regard, the “radical existentialism” of Heidegger, who, recognizing the impossibility of ethics, was permeated, as Strauss later puts it, by awareness of the “abyss of freedom” that this “fact” opens up [RCPR 28-9, 34]. See also 1959 seminar, session 6; Strauss here traces Kant’s treatment of justice in a way that guarantees its “realizability” partly to the importance for him of morality. At the same time, Strauss also suggests that freedom may count for Kant even more than morality itself, contributing to the peculiar tension in his understanding of the just order as both morally required and in itself a-moral (1958 seminar, session 8).

^{xxviii} The 1958 seminar treats (in the following order): *Prolegomenon* (Introduction), *Critique of Pure Reason* (prefaces and select passages), *Idea for A Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent*, *Theory and Practice*, *Idea for a Universal History*, *Perpetual Peace*, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *The Critique of Judgment* (select passages); the main text is: *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant’s Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1949). The 1967 seminar treats (in the following order): *The Critique of Pure Reason* (selections), *Metaphysical Foundation of Morals*, *What Is Enlightenment?*, * *Idea for a Universal History*, *A Critical Review of J. G. Herder’s Ideas for a Philosophy of History*, * *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, * *Theory and Practice*, *The End of All Things*, * *Perpetual Peace*, *An Old Question Raised Again*. * Course texts include both *The Philosophy of Kant*, and *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1963); works drawn from the latter are here marked with an asterix.

Intention of Rousseau” and in *Natural Right and History*.^{xxix} Among these peculiarities is a combination of “idealism” and “realism” that is uniquely modern (1958 seminar, sessions 10, 14; 1967 seminar, session 17). On the one hand, Kant wishes to return to a classical understanding of morality as something to be valued for its own sake; on the other hand, he does so on the basis of a modern, and ultimately Hobbesian, prioritizing of rights over duties, and with an emphasis on human sovereignty (and related defense against divine omnipotence) that is foreign, albeit for different reasons, to both the Biblical tradition and to the spirit of Plato and Aristotle (1958 seminar, sessions 2, 10).

More specifically: the general will that in Rousseau gives rise to laws that cannot be unjust (1958 seminar, session 11; 1967 seminar, session 2) and which provides the formal model for Kant’s categorical imperative, is itself grounded in motives of self-preservation that Kant wishes radically to transcend in the name of “freedom” or reason understood as “spontaneity” (1958 seminar, session 2; 1967 seminar, session 8). At the same time, the resulting moralization of Rousseau’s thought, as reflected in Kant’s famous confession that Rousseau “turned [him] around/brought [him] into the right shape” (1958 seminar, session 1; 1967 seminar, session 1), goes hand in hand with an appropriation on Kant’s part of Rousseau’s Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar that succeeds better than the latter in elaborating a morally based metaphysics. (1967 seminar, session 4). Kant, as Strauss puts it in his 1968 essay on “Natural Law,” draws the “incisive conclusion” from Rousseau’s “epoch-making innovations” (above all, with respect to human “malleability”) that Rousseau himself declined to state:

The Ought cannot be derived from the Is, from human nature; the moral law is not a natural law or derivative from a natural law; the criterion of the moral law is its form alone, the form of rationality, *i.e.*, of universality. [SPPP 145]

It is Rousseau rather than Hume, on Strauss’s account, who provokes Kant’s fateful severing of the “ought” from the “is.” At the same time, his accompanying transformation of natural right and natural law “into a law and a right which is rational but no longer natural” coincided, as Strauss tersely concludes, with Burke’s politically

^{xxix} Strauss’s *Natural Right and History*, based on lectures delivered in 1949, appeared in 1953; a later essay on “Natural Law” (1968), was republished in the SPPP (1983), which appeared posthumously. Here, as well as in *Natural Right and History* and his earlier essay “On the Intention of Rousseau” (1947), Strauss traces the immediate source of Kant’s obfuscation to his misunderstanding of Rousseau that “led, and leads, directly to Kant’s assertion of the primacy of practical reason.” One purpose of Strauss’s 1947 essay was to correct that misunderstanding as recently reaffirmed by both a contemporary editor, whose authoritative edition of Rousseau’s work provides the occasion for Strauss’s essay—and, though it is not mentioned, in Cassirer’s posthumously published *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe*. See Strauss, “On the Intention of Rousseau,” *Social Research* 14 (1947): 462; cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* [Édition critique avec une introduction et commentaire par George R. Havens] (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1946) and Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe: Two Essays*, trans. James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller, John Herman Randall, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945). Needless to say, “intention” here does not mean *Gesinnung* or intention in a Kantian sense. (Cf. LSTPP 162 and note 10 above.)

opposing effort to recover a non-revolutionary or pre-modern natural law that had the unwanted effect of preparing “decisively” the transition from “natural law to the ‘historical school.’” Strauss here sketches in a few deft strokes the seemingly missing chapter in his earlier *Natural Right and History*, which contained dedicated and lengthy treatments of Rousseau and Burke while hardly mentioning Kant (or Hegel); and it may, as such, provide an outline of the German “sequel” to *Natural Right and History* that Strauss is rumored to have once contemplated.

One suspects that Strauss had his planned essay on “Natural Law” especially in mind when presenting his 1967 seminar on Kant, which particularly stresses the limitations of Kant’s formalized politics, a topic that serves as the course’s culminating theme.^{xxx} His earlier course (1958), by way of contrast, treats Kant’s political writings (or what Strauss there calls the “periphery”) *before* rather than *after* Kant’s moral writings, and with a view to seeing what he “was driving at in practical terms” (1958 seminar, session 12). Strauss also presents Kant in a somewhat more sympathetic light in the earlier course, speaking appreciatively at one point of his “moral pathos” (1958 seminar, session 10; cf. session 11),^{xxxi} and of an accompanying power of expression (particularly with respect to the unconditional goodness of good will) that makes it difficult “to come to one’s senses” (1958 seminar, session 12).^{xxxi} And Strauss offers a searching discussion (largely absent from the later course) both of the limitations of Kant’s position and of Plato’s alternative understanding of the one good that “cannot be misused” (1958 seminar, sessions 12, 14, 15; cf. 1967, sessions 2, 5, 6, 17). If Strauss was indeed especially preoccupied in 1967 with questions of natural law, he seems to have been more deeply engaged, in his earlier course, in exploring the question of what Kant himself was really after (1958 seminar, sessions 2, 3, 4, 12, 16; cf. 1967 seminar, session 17).

List of Title Abbreviations

GS = *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier, 3 vols. (Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2008)

LSEW = *Leo Strauss: Early Writings (1921-1932)*, ed. and trans. Michael Zank (SUNY Press, 2002)

LSM = *Leo Strauss on Maimonides: The Complete Writings*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (University of Chicago Press, 2012)

NRH = *Natural Right and History* (University of Chicago Press, 1953)

PAW = *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Free Press, 1952)

RCPR = *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1989)

SCR = *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, trans. Elsa Sinclair (University of Chicago Press, 1965)

^{xxx} Cf. 1958 seminar, sessions 7, 8, 11; 1967 seminar, sessions 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17.

^{xxxi} Cf. Strauss’s 1928 review of Freud [LSEW 203].

^{xxxi} At one point Strauss even offers Kant a “Churchillian” defense! 1958 seminar, session 11.

SPPP = *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1983)
WIPP = *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Free Press, 1959)

Meier, HSTPP = Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theological-Political Problem*
(Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Shell, CCS = Susan Shell, "Conception of Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy*, July
1994

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on natural right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Strauss's colleague Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Over time the audiotape deteriorated. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This project received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: <https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward but did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed

Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director, Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Shiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker of the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor

August 2014

Editorial Headnote

The course was taught in a seminar form. Strauss began class with general remarks; a student then read aloud portions of the text, followed by Strauss's comments and responses to student questions and comments. The texts discussed in the course were *The Critique of Pure Reason* (selections), *Metaphysical Foundation of Morals*, *What Is Enlightenment?*, * *Idea for a Universal History*, *A Critical Review of J. G. Herder's Ideas for a Philosophy of History*, * *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, * *Theory and Practice*, *The End of All Things*, * *Perpetual Peace*, *An Old Question Raised Again*. * Course texts include both *The Philosophy of Kant*, and *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1963); works drawn from the latter are here marked

with an asterix. When the text was read aloud in class, this transcript records the words as they appear in the text. Original spelling has been retained. Citations are included for all passages.

The audiotapes for all seventeen sessions of the course have survived. This transcript is based upon the remastered audiofiles.

Administrative details regarding paper or seminar topics or meeting rooms or times have been deleted, but reading assignments have been retained. Footnotes have been provided to identify persons, texts, and events to which Strauss refers.

This transcript was edited by Susan Shell, with assistance from Kimberley Stewart Burns, Daniel Burns, Grayson Gilmore, and Jonathan Yudelman.

Session 1: April 4, 1967

Leo Strauss: Now the first paper has already been given to Mr. Bruell, and that is the *Critique of Pure Reason*,ⁱ pages 418-28 in the second edition. There is a paperback edition of the translation by Norman Kemp Smith, and in the margin you find figures, say, “A300, B320.” “A” means first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and “B,” second edition. I take the second edition. Now the second paper is *Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition, pages 560-586. And the third paper is page[s] 823-859. Now these are these marginal figures, B, B! Second edition. I have a copy of Norman Kemp Smith’s translation which I am willing to loan on the basis of a collateral [laughter] to whoever might need it,¹ but there may be some of you who own it or wish to own it. Good.² This kind of difficulty will not occur. The next three papers will be with the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*,ⁱⁱ which consists of three sections, each paper dealing with one section. And there is only one handicap here: the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals* is preceded by an introduction, or preface, which is not given in the Modern Library edition. So³ the student who reads the paper on the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*, number one, would have to get hold of the Liberal Arts edition of this work.

Student: Could you say which sections those second and third papers are on?

LS: Yes. That I think is a fair request. Now let me see. That is called “Solution,” or “Analysis of the Cosmological Idea Regarding the Totality of Deducing Happenings in the World From Their Causes.” Meaning, the conflict between causality and freedom. And the last⁴ section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is called the “Canon of Pure Reason.” What this means, you will see when you read it.

Now the other papers are all taken either from the Modern Libraryⁱⁱⁱ or from that other book, what is—

Mr. Reinken: “*On History*.”^{iv}

LS: *On History*. So in the eighth meeting we read *What is Enlightenment?* and the *Idea for a Universal History*. In the ninth meeting, the review of Herder, Herder’s philosophy of history.^v In the tenth meeting, the *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*. In the eleventh meeting, *Theory and Practice*, of which only one part⁵ has been translated in the Modern Library edition. There are three parts, but as far as I know there is no English

ⁱ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965).

ⁱⁱ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).

ⁱⁱⁱ Strauss refers to Kant, *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant’s Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1949).

^{iv} Kant, *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963).

^v “Reviews of Herder’s *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*,” in *On History*.

translation of the whole, which is regrettable. Twelfth meeting: *The End of All Things*. Thirteenth meeting: *Perpetual Peace*, the text itself. And the fourteenth meeting: *Perpetual Peace*, the appendix. The appendix is⁶ at least as long as the text itself. And the fifteenth meeting: *An Old Question Raised Again*.^{vi7}

Now let us begin at the beginning, from things which are obvious to anyone.⁸ Now when people speak today of political issues, they come to speak sooner or later of two fundamentally different approaches to political things: the approaches called liberalism and conservatism. Liberalism is understood, here and now, in contradistinction to conservatism. Now this distinction is sufficient for most practical purposes, but to admit this is tantamount to saying that the distinction is not free from theoretical difficulties, and these theoretical difficulties are not necessarily barren of practical consequences.

Of one difficulty, one can dispose very easily. Most people are liberal in some respects and conservative in others. A very moderate liberal may not be distinguishable from a very moderate conservative. But this very assertion presupposes the existence at least of the ideal type of the liberal and the ideal type of the conservative. Now ideal type, in case you have not read Max Weber, means a construct for the purpose of analysis to which nothing need correspond in reality. It stems fundamentally from physics, but has been carried over to [the] social sciences. Yet the ideal types are quite real in this particular case. Proof: no one would hesitate to call Barry Goldwater^{vii} a conservative and Wayne Morse^{viii} a liberal. A liberal can be said, as of now, to be a man who is for the war against poverty [laughter] and against the war in Vietnam, while the conservative is a man who is in favor of the war in Vietnam and against the war against poverty. This, I believe,⁹ will be universally admitted.

Now a somewhat deeper difficulty comes to sight once we consider the fact that liberalism and conservatism have a common basis. Both are based on liberal democracy, and therefore both are opposed to communism. Hence, their opposition does not seem to be fundamental, yet they differ profoundly in this very opposition. One can say that liberalism agrees with communism in a general way as regards the ultimate goal, although it radically disagrees with communism as regards the ways and means toward that goal. The goal: the universal and classless society, or to accept a formulation proposed by Monsieur Kojève,^{ix} “the universal and homogeneous state.”^x Every adult

^{vi} “An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?” in *On History*.

^{vii} Barry Goldwater (1909-1998), United States Senator from Arizona, 1953-1965 and 1969-1987. Goldwater ran for President as a Republican in 1964, losing to Lyndon B. Johnson in a landslide. He is considered one of the leading figures of twentieth century conservatism, and is the author of *Conscience of a Conservative* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Publications, 2009).

^{viii} Wayne Lyman Morse (1900-1974), United States Senator from Oregon, 1945-1969.

^{ix} Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968), French philosopher and statesman of Russian extraction. Kojève’s lectures on Hegel were very influential in twentieth century continental philosophy, and he kept a lifelong friendship and correspondence with Strauss. As a statesman, he helped found the European Common Market.

human being is to be a full member of that state, regardless of sex, race, ethnic origin, or any other consideration. The necessary and sufficient title to full citizenship in that state is supplied by one's being an adult, non-moronic human being, for all such times when one is not locked up in an insane asylum or a penitentiary.

Now the ways and means according to liberalism as distinguished from communism are these: the universal and homogeneous state is to be achieved preferably by democratic, peaceful means—at any rate, without war, although not necessarily without revolutions, revolutions backed by the sympathy or at least the interest of the majority of the people of the country concerned. There is also a difference regarding the goal itself, because a liberal would insist that in¹⁰ this state the right to criticize [the] measures and men of the government must be preserved. Even the man at the top of the hierarchy, whatever his name may be, must be subject to public criticism. And this right [of]¹¹ public criticism must be granted to everyone, however humble, odd, or inarticulate he may be.

Now someone might say that most liberals are much too pragmatic to aim consciously at the universal state. After all, that is not a practical proposal in our time and age. They would be perfectly satisfied with a federation of the now-existing or soon-emerging states, provided these states submit to control by a truly universal and greatly strengthened United Nations. Still, this would mean that they are concerned with the greatest possible *approximation* to the universal and homogeneous state, or that they are guided by the *ideal* of the universal and homogeneous state, an ideal which perhaps will never be fully actualized. Some liberals might object to the term “ideal” on the ground that the universal and homogeneous state, or the greatest possible approximation to it, is a requirement of hard-headed politics and not to be mistaken with an ideal, in the woolly sense of the word. The universal and homogeneous state is rendered possible or necessary by economic and technological progress (including the absolute necessity of making thermonuclear war impossible for all future time), and it is rendered necessary and possible by the ever-increasing wealth of the advanced countries, which are compelled by sheer self-interest to develop the underdeveloped countries. As for the still-existing tension between the liberal democracies and the communist countries,¹² that tension will be disposed of by the ever-increasing welfarism in the liberal democracies, and the ever-increasing liberalism, due to the demands for consumer goods of all kinds, in the communist states. I believe that I have not said anything which you do not know by heart, but I have to remind you of that.

Now, conservatism does not necessarily deny the necessity or desirability of larger political units than what one may call the typical nation-state of the nineteenth century. For good or ill, the conservatives can no longer be imperialists. But there is no reason why conservatives should be opposed, for instance, to a united Europe,¹³ or perhaps even to NATO. Yet they are likely to understand such units differently from the liberals. An outstanding European conservative^{xi} has spoken of *L'Europe des patries*, of the Europe

^x See, e.g., Alexandre Kojève, “Tyranny and Wisdom,” in Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Corrected and Expanded Edition*, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 173.

^{xi} Charles de Gaulle.

of the fatherlands. In other words, there should be a larger unit but the original units should nevertheless be preserved in decisive respects. Conservatism has a more favorable posture toward the particular or particularistic, and the heterogeneous than the liberals—a greater eagerness to respect natural or historical diversity. In this country, for example, the conservatives are more in favor of state's rights than the liberals.¹⁴ Also, to the extent to which universalism in politics is based on the universalism essential to reason, conservatism is characterized by a distrust of reason, particularly of what is called “abstract” reason.

But here we must raise this question: What precisely is the virtue of *diversity* as such? I mean, after all, at first glance the thing which seems to be important would be human excellence¹⁵ as [a] universal goal for all men. Why should there be a virtue in diversity as such? Diversity is, as it were, taken care of by the mere fact that men are by nature so greatly different. So the excellence of A will not be *identical* with the excellence of B. But why this concern of the conservatives with diversity? Perhaps the respect for diversity is rooted in the respect for individuality; this is at least frequently said. I do not think that we will succeed in drawing a clear line between conservatism and liberalism on that ground. We remain somewhat closer to what is noncontroversial by saying that the conservatives' greater and deeper regard for the natural and historical diversity is rooted in their distrust of change, in what is called by the liberals the stand-pat-ism of the conservatives, their sticking to the status quo, whereas the liberals have less misgivings regarding change. Liberals are more inclined than conservatives to be sanguine regarding change. [Liberals]¹⁶ are inclined to believe that on the whole, change is change for the better (of course there are exceptions). Change for the better: that means progress.

And as a matter of fact (and here I mention something which must come as a novelty to you) liberals frequently are called progressives.¹⁷ Progressivism is indeed a better term for the opposite to conservatism than is liberalism, for conservatism [is] the desire to *preserve*, and because of distrust of change. Therefore the opposite of conservatism should be defined as the opposite posture toward change, toward the future. One is thus tempted to say that conservatism and progressivism are opposed to each other by their posture toward change rather than by their substantive goals. But this is not precise enough. Both conservatism and progressivism agree that the change goes in the direction of the universal or homogeneous state, and it is for this reason that the progressivists applaud the change and the conservatives fear it. This, incidentally, would explain why conservatism is on the whole weaker than progressivism or liberalism; in other words, the greater, stronger trend is in favor of this movement.

Now the difficulty of defining clearly the opposition between conservatism and liberalism is particularly great in this country because this country came into being by virtue of a revolution, which means of a violent change, a violent break with the past. And it is quite interesting that one of the most conservative groups in this country calls itself the “Daughters of the American *Revolution*.” The opposition between liberalism and conservatism was much clearer in the first half of the nineteenth century on the continent of Europe, and it is on the continent of Europe in this time—say, in the early nineteenth century—that these two parties opposed each other for the first time under

these names. On the one side there was throne and altar, conservative; on the other, popular sovereignty and religion as a private affair. That was a clear-cut, substantive difference. In England, which is in between the European continent and this country (and not only geographically),¹⁸ the struggle between the two opposed forces had been partly decided against throne and altar already in the seventeenth century, 1688, [with]¹⁹ the Whigs versus the Tories; and the Whigs, one can say with a slight exaggeration, were allied with the Bank of England and the Tories with throne and altar.

Now to reach full clarity about the issue which is concealed in the contemporary conflict between conservatism and liberalism, one would have to go back to [seventeenth]²⁰-century England where this issue started. And this means, in the first place, to the new political philosophy or political science of Thomas Hobbes. This is here only a bald assertion, but at the beginning of a course one must make some assumptions, and perhaps we have time to explain it later. Yet one cannot stop at Hobbes: the analysis of Hobbes's political philosophy brings to light the fact that the primary premise of the radical change which was effected by Hobbes was stated or established by Machiavelli. And here I refer again to the fifteenth chapter of Machiavelli's *Prince*, which is only one or two pages; and those who have not read it, or [have not] read it for some time, are requested to read it. What Machiavelli proposes there is roughly this. Political philosophy hitherto was guided by how men *ought* to live, and this led to the consequence that traditional political philosophy culminated in the description of or demand for *imaginary* principalities or imaginary kingdoms, republics, which means regimes which are not necessarily actual. And²¹ that this is a good analysis of traditional political philosophy can easily be proven by the study of Plato and Aristotle. The good society is the society directed toward virtue, toward human excellence; and this good society,²² if taken strictly, is not necessarily actual, and the chances are that it will not be actual because virtue is not such a powerful incentive most of the time.

Now against this, Machiavelli demands that we should take our bearings by how men *do* live, not by how they ought to live.²³ In other words, Machiavelli says: if you want to have some reasonable *order* of human things, you should not aim so high, as high as Plato and Aristotle, to say nothing of the churchmen, did. You must lower your standards. A simple example: the most famous version of the traditional doctrine in Hobbes's time was the natural law doctrine as developed especially by Thomas Aquinas, and according to that teaching, there are three kinds of natural inclinations: self-preservation, sociality, and knowledge of God or knowledge in general. What Hobbes did was to forget about the two higher things and understand civil society as perfectly intelligible on the basis of the lowest and first—that is, the desire for self-preservation—in the belief that the lowest is the most effective. I mean,²⁴ most people most of the time don't wish to be killed and they have a very strong aversion to being killed, whereas²⁵ their altruism²⁶ is not so very powerful most of the time. Good.²⁷ Hobbes, as it were, to use a Churchillian phrase, tried to build political science on a "low but solid ground,"^{xii} and this is a thought which has had tremendous effects. One can also say, describing Hobbes's view, [that] he was the

^{xii} Strauss quotes this phrase in *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 247. A reference to Churchill using the phrase was not found.

first political thinker who was a political hedonist, identifying the good with the pleasant²⁸—but *political*, whereas the classical hedonists were not political thinkers.

Here at this moment, I mention Kant for the first time, although he has been²⁹ on my mind all the time. What Kant³⁰ tried to do was to restore the high moral level and tone of classical political philosophy—nay, even surpassing the classics in this respect. And thus we can say Kant became, more than anybody else, the founder of a moral, and severely moral liberalism in contradistinction from the hedonistic or utilitarian liberalism founded by Hobbes. Now this needs obvious qualification, which I will mention immediately. It goes without saying that the tradition founded by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle did not die out by virtue of the acts of Machiavelli or even of Hobbes. In the first place, the Catholic tradition preserved the older view; but even in the Protestant countries it proved to be necessary very soon to restore the older tradition to the extent to which this was compatible with the requirements of Protestantism. I mention one great example, that is Richard Hooker,^{xiii} who rewrote, with very minor changes as far as political philosophy proper is concerned, the Thomistic teaching. And this was of course also true in Germany, and here the greatest name one would have to mention is that of Christian Wolff,^{xiv} a name which we will find when reading Kant. Of course there are other men, for example Shaftesbury,^{xv} who tried to preserve or restore the classical tradition against Hobbes, Locke, and so on.

Now hitherto I have spoken of how a simple reflection on our political situation leads us to Kant. Let me now say a few words of how a simple reflection on political science, which is not the same as the political situation, leads to Kant. Political science, as you all know, is a part of the social sciences and therefore, according to its claim, value-free. It is based on the distinction between facts and values.³¹ Factual judgments are the legitimate sphere of social sciences but value judgments transcend that sphere. The distinction between facts and values is a modification of the *older* distinction between *is* and *ought*. The distinction between *is* and *ought* was classically stated by Kant; but according to Kant there is rational knowledge, *knowledge* of the *ought*, and this is denied by the social sciences. According to the social sciences there cannot be knowledge of *the* true values. *The* true values: that doesn't exist! Or in other words, according to social science, all values are equal before the tribunal of reason and hence of the social sciences.

The scientific understanding of political things or social things is preceded by the *prescientific* understanding of them: the commonsense understanding of them or the citizen's understanding of them. This commonsense understanding is not simply superseded by the scientific understanding or transformed into scientific understanding. In the decisive respect, the prescientific understanding survives intact, as a basis of scientific understanding. In other words, our ordinary citizen's understanding of political things is not something like a hat which we leave with the girl before we enter the

^{xiii} Richard Hooker (1554-1600), Anglican priest and theologian.

^{xiv} Christian Wolff (1679-1754), German philosopher.

^{xv} Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), English politician and philosopher.

restaurant (in this case, the Social Science building)^{xvi} but it [LS taps on table]³² keeps this all the time. There is a very simple proof of that which I have used *n* times and I ask the older students among you to forgive me if I repeat it. Now when you [are] sent out—not in this department but, let us say, in sociology—to make some field studies and to find answers to a question, no one will tell you [that you] should ask only human beings and not dogs, cats, trees and so on. It goes without saying. And, still more strange, no one tells you how to tell a human being from a cat, dog, or a tree. That is simply presupposed. Now you can say: Well, that's all things³³ which are a matter of course, but these are exactly the problematic things, which are taken for granted without any consideration.

Now this commonsense understanding on which all scientific understanding is based is unaware of the fact/value distinction. As you can easily see that, for example, the statement “This man is a crook,” or “This is a corrupt machine”—these are as much factual statements for the citizen as the statement “There are so and so many millions of people in the city of Chicago, or in Cook County.” It would seem then that a return to the commonsense understanding would free us from the absurdities which follow from the assumptions that all values are equal.

But here we are confronted by a very great difficulty, namely, by the fact that the commonsense understanding is variable. The present-day common sense is not the common sense of the age of Queen Victoria, and still less the common sense of the Middle Ages, and so on and so on. In a word, the common sense is radically historical. If this is so, there cannot be *the* true value system, *the* true concept of the good society. And therefore political philosophy in any serious sense of the word is impossible. Now, we must face this difficulty. We must try to reach clarity about it, about this question: Is philosophy, and in particular political philosophy, essentially historical or not? And therefore, in order to understand this question, we must have³⁴ the greatest possible clarity about these two alternatives: a fundamentally historical political philosophy; and a fundamentally non-historical political philosophy. And this requires in the first place [an] understanding of Plato and Aristotle,³⁵ whose political philosophy cannot be called historical in any serious sense.

Kant is of particular importance as regards this question. According to Kant, there is *the* true moral and political doctrine, valid for man as man, just as all earlier thinkers had thought. Yet there is a difference. Let us—do you have the *Critique of Pure Reason*?³⁶ The last section. Let us read³⁷ the heading of the last section first.³⁸

Mr. Reinken: “History of Pure Reason.”^{39xvii}

LS: Yes. Is this imaginable⁴⁰ that Plato [or Aristotle] would have spoken of a history⁴¹ of pure reason? Now read a bit, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xvi} Where Strauss's classes met.

^{xvii} *Critique of Pure Reason*, B880.

This title stands here only in order to indicate one remaining division of the system, which future workers must complete. I content myself with casting a cursory glance, from a purely transcendental point of view, namely, that of the nature of pure reason, on the works of those who have labored in this field—a glance which reveals [many stately] structures, but in ruins only.

It is a very notable fact, although it could not have been otherwise, that in the infancy of philosophy men began where we should incline to end, namely, with the knowledge of God, occupying themselves with the hope, or rather indeed with the specific nature, of another world. However gross the religious concepts generated by the ancient practices which still persisted in each community from an earlier more barbarous state, this did not prevent the more enlightened members from devoting themselves to free investigation of these matters.^{xviii}

LS: Namely, God and immortality of the soul. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

and they easily discerned that there could be no better ground or more dependable way of pleasing the invisible power that governs the world, and so of being happy in another world at least, than by living the good life. Accordingly theology and morals were the two motives, or rather the two points of reference, in all those abstract enquiries of reason to which men came to devote themselves. It was chiefly, however, the former that step by step committed the purely speculative reason to those labors which afterwards became so renowned under the name of metaphysics.

I shall not here attempt to distinguish the periods of history in which this or that change in metaphysics came about, but shall only give a cursory sketch of the various ideas which gave rise to the chief revolutions [in metaphysical theory]. And here I find that there are three issues in regard to which the most noteworthy changes have taken place in the course of the resulting controversies.^{xix}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. And now in the sequel, Kant speaks of the fundamental alternatives regarding metaphysics and he treats them as essentially coeval,⁴² not as historical, in other words. And let us read now the last paragraph of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴³

Mr. Reinken:

As regards those who adopt a *scientific* method, they have the choice of proceeding either *dogmatically* or *skeptically*; but in any case they are under obligation to proceed *systematically*. I may cite the celebrated Wolff as a

^{xviii} B880. Brackets in original.

^{xix} B880-881. Brackets in original.

representative of the former mode of procedure, and David Hume as a representative of the latter, and may then, conformably with my present purpose, leave all others unnamed. The *critical* path alone is still open.^{xx}

LS: The critical in contradistinction to the dogmatic and the skeptical. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

If the reader has had the courtesy and the patience to accompany me along this path, he may now judge for himself whether, if he cares to lend his aid in making this path into a high-road, it may not be possible to achieve before the end of the present century what many centuries had not been able to accomplish; namely, to secure for human reason complete satisfaction in regard to that with which it has all along so eagerly occupied itself, though hitherto in vain.^{xxi}

LS: So in other words, the perfect satisfaction of reason is imminent. There is, then, something like a history of progress, of a single process leading from original barbarism and obscurantism to the complete satisfaction of reason. Now, to appreciate this fact, let us contrast it with the parallel in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book *Lambda*, 1074b 1-14. Please read that.

Mr. Reinken:

Our forefathers in the most remote ages have handed down to their posterity a tradition, in the form of a myth, that these bodies are gods and that the divine—^{xxii}

LS: “These bodies” are heavenly bodies. Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

and that the divine encloses the whole of nature. The rest of the tradition has been added later in mythical form with a view to the persuasion of the multitude and to its legal and utilitarian expediency; they say these gods are in the form of men or like some of the other animals, and they say other things consequent on and similar to these which we have mentioned.^{xxiii}

LS: I mean in other words,⁴⁴ the common view of the laws. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

But if one were to separate the first point from these additions and take it alone—that they thought the first substances to be gods, one must regard this as an inspired utterance, and reflect that, while probably each art and each science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions, with others, have been preserved until the present like relics of the ancient

^{xx} B884.

^{xxi} B884.

^{xxii} Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1966), 884.

^{xxiii} *Ibid.*

treasure. Only thus far, then, is the opinion of our ancestors and of our earliest predecessors clear to us.^{xxiv}

LS: Ya, thank you.⁴⁵ Now you see for Aristotle, the question is very different. There is also a barbaric beginning, so to speak,⁴⁶ leading up to *the* highest form of philosophy, meaning Aristotle's philosophy. But for Aristotle, this is a process which happened and *will* happen⁴⁷ *n* times.⁴⁸ For Kant there is only one process. Now there is a passage in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, 983a24 to b6, where Aristotle gives what now would be called a survey of the history of philosophy from the beginning up to him. But⁴⁹ [it] would be wrong to describe it as⁵⁰ especially a history of pure reason. Aristotle here makes a certain assertion—there are four kinds of causes—which he had already made in his *Physics*. And now he gives an indirect proof of the truth of this assertion by looking at all thinkers of whom he knows, and no one of them has ever found a fifth kind of⁵¹ [cause]. And this shows⁵² or *confirms* the assertion that there only four kinds of causes; it's something very different.

Now to come back to Kant: history of pure reason as a part of the system which Kant did not elaborate (but which ought to be elaborated by some good student of Kant, as it were). We have to add to this of course that Kant has written quite a few essays on the philosophy of history, these essays which we are going to discuss in this class. The term “philosophy of history” was coined not so long before Kant, around 1750, by Voltaire, who meant something different than Kant meant by it, something much⁵³ less exacting.^{xxv} The philosophy of history itself, without the term, is usually traced to Vico, the Italian Giambattista Vico,^{xxvi} around 1700. But it surely exists in Herder, with whom Kant takes issue in one of the essays we are going to read. However this may be, although history is much more powerfully present in Kant than in the thought of earlier philosophers, nevertheless it is not a part of Kant's system. And we have to raise this question: What is responsible for the fact that philosophy of history as it were raises its head at the gates of Kant's thought and yet it does not get a proper entry? What is it in Kant that counteracted the so-called historical consciousness? The answer can only be found in Kant's moral philosophy [LS taps on table], and we will turn to that later.

Now one brief reflection is perhaps in order at this point. Now what is history? When you speak today of a[n] historian, without any addition, you mean a political historian. Otherwise you would say he is an economic historian, he's a historian of art, historian of science, or what have you. So history seems to be particularly close to politics. One may wonder whether the historical way of thinking, which emerged in the eighteenth century and became all-powerful in the nineteenth,⁵⁴ is not connected primarily with a political problem. The political problem was viewed for many centuries in the light of the notion of natural right; and then this notion of natural right, which goes back to classical

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Historian J. B. Bury attributes the first use of the phrase to Voltaire, in a 1756 dissertation which later served as the introduction to his *Essai Sur les Moeurs et L'Esprit des Nations*. See Alban Gregory Widgery, *Interpretations of History: Confucius to Toynbee* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1961), 158.

^{xxvi} Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), Italian political philosopher.

antiquity, underwent a radical modification⁵⁵ owing to Hobbes. So I call the new kind of natural right which started with Hobbes the modern natural right. Perhaps certain difficulties inherent in the modern notion of natural right led to the emergence of this historical way of thinking. The term “historical jurisprudence” occurs in Burke, as I happen to know.^{xxvii} Prior to him, the last books of Montesquieu’s *Spirit of Laws* are clearly historical books. In the early nineteenth century the historical school of jurisprudence emerged, first in Germany and then spreading to France and England.

Now this much about some of the reasons why our present concerns lead us to the common concern with Kant. Those concerns of ours are however not Kant’s concerns, are not his primary and overriding concern. What then was Kant’s concern? That we can say without⁵⁶ [fear] of being contradicted immediately⁵⁷: Kant was concerned with⁵⁸ metaphysics and ethics, but in such a way that ethics was no longer to be understood as based on metaphysics but rather the basis of metaphysics.

And now let us read some other statements of Kant. You see we have to do quite a bit of original readings. Now in the Modern Library edition, if you will turn to page 42, you find a statement of Kant which is quite clear, he suspects.

Mr. Reinken: “Since the attempts of Locke and Leibnitz”?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Since the attempts of Locke and Leibnitz, or rather since the first rise of metaphysics, no event has occurred that could be more decisive for the fortunes of this science than the attack made upon it by David Hume. He contributed no new light to this kind of knowledge, but he struck a spark by which a light might have been kindled had it encountered receptive tinder whose glimmer could have been preserved and enlarged.

Hume took for his initial starting point a single but important conception of metaphysics, namely, that of the *connection of cause and effect* (together with the derivative conceptions of force and action, etc.). He demanded that reason, which pretends to have given metaphysics birth, give a—^{xxviii}

LS: No, no, no—not metaphysics: to have given birth, or to have generated, the concept⁵⁹ of cause and effect.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxvii} See for example, Edmund Burke, “Fragment—An Essay Towards an History of the Laws of England,” in *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (New York: Penguin Books), 83.

^{xxviii} Kant, “Prolegomena to Every Future Metaphysics That May Be Presented As Science,” in *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant’s Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1949), 42. Spelling of Leibniz in original.

which pretends to have generated the concept of cause and effect, give a reasoned answer to the question: By what right does reason think that something is of such a quality that on its being posited something else is thereby necessarily also posited? For that is the meaning of the concept of cause. Hume proved irrefutably that it is quite impossible for reason to imagine this connection *a priori* and based in a mere concept since this connection involves necessity. It is not at all apparent how, because something exists something else must necessarily exist, and thus how the concept of such a connection can be introduced *a priori*. Hence Hume concluded that reason completely deceived itself by this concept, that reason falsely claimed this concept as its own child, while it was nothing more than a bastard of the imagination, which, conceived by experience, had brought certain representations—^{xxix}

LS: Not “conceived.” *Geschwängert* is the opposite, the male act.

Mr. Reinken: Begot?

LS: Ya, ya. Begotten.

Mr. Reinken: Begotten.

LS: By experience?

Mr. Reinken:

by experience, had brought certain representations under the law of association, and had substituted a resulting subjective necessity, i.e., habit, for an objective necessity based on insight. From this he concluded that reason possessed no faculty for thinking of such connections even in general terms, because [if it did] its concepts would then be mere constructs, and all its—^{xxx}

LS: Fictions.

Mr. Reinken: fictions,

and all its pretended *a priori* knowledge nothing but common experiences mislabeled; which is to say that no such thing as metaphysics—^{xxx} concept of cause and effect?^{xxxii}

LS: So in other words—

Mr. Reinken: “exists at all—”^{xxxiii}

^{xxix} Ibid., 42-43.

^{xxx} Ibid., 43. Brackets in original.

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxii} Mr. Reinken pauses, then continues reading, and Strauss interrupts him.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

LS: Now let us go on a little bit later, on page 45, the second paragraph. “I confess promptly—”

Mr. Reinken:

I readily confess that the reminder [challenge] of David Hume was what first interrupted my dogmatic slumber many years ago and gave my research in the field of speculative philosophy quite a different direction. I was quite far from accepting the consequences which resulted merely from his not having faced his problem squarely, but having only attacked a part of it which could not possibly afford a solution by itself. When one starts from a well-founded, though undeveloped, idea that a predecessor has left, one may well hope that by increased reflection one can bring it further than was possible for the acute man whom one has to thank for the original sparks of its light.^{xxxiv}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So this sentence, the challenge (as⁶⁰ [Friedrich] translates) of David Hume, all that was exactly that which interrupted many years ago the “dogmatic slumber” and “gave to my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy an entirely different direction.” So important was Hume to Kant. Now in order to get some notion of the purport of this statement, let us consider the following thing: What had happened in the eighteenth century generally speaking, especially in Protestant Germany but not only there, was the apparent victory of the rationalistic Enlightenment over revealed religion. And there were two kinds of such rationalism: the moderate one preponderant⁶¹ [in] the universities, and the greatest⁶² man among them was Christian Wolff, to whom I referred before. And this moderate view accepted the notion of a natural or rational theology, demonstrations of the existence of God and so on, as an evidently possible thing. Now there was also a radical enlightenment, which is presented most obviously by Voltaire and which was much more skeptical regarding rational theology. And then as it were to the left of Voltaire, the materialistic atheism of some French writers, like La Mettrie,^{xxxv} and so on. And behind this radical enlightenment there is one outstanding figure, and that is Hobbes. So either the moderate or the radical rationalism were definitely victorious prior to Kant.

Hume is not exactly *opposed* to that rationalism. In other words, Hume is not an orthodox Christian. But what’s important, and the epoch-making point in Hume which had such a deep influence on Kant is this: that Hume questioned the *basis* of that rationalism. And the key point mentioned by Kant is: Causality is not rational. [LS taps on the table] Hence, of course, the demonstration of the existence of God as the first cause cannot be rational. Hume questions (that is the way in which Kant understood him) both metaphysics as a rational science *and* natural science at the same time. Whether Hume was fully aware of this indication is another matter, but that is the way in which Kant understood him. And⁶³ we have to consider for a moment the general character of Kant’s reply to Hume.⁶⁴ You have the *Prolegomena* there,⁶⁵ ya, in the Modern Library edition?

^{xxxiv} Ibid., 45. Brackets in original.

^{xxxv} Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709-1751), French philosopher and physician.

Well now, before we read, you might look up paragraph two. But let me try to give . . . concept.

Now Kant's diagnosis (if one can say that) of the situation is this: that both the dogmatists of the past, including Leibniz, and Locke, and that skeptic David Hume, have overlooked one kind of judgment. There are according to Kant first, two kinds of judgments, which he calls analytical and synthetic. Analytical judgment is a judgment in which the predicate is implied in the subject, say, "all bodies are extended," is an analytical judgment because "body," when you analyze it, is "extended." But, say, "some cats are black" on the other hand is a synthetic judgment, because the concept of "cat" does not imply the concept of "blackness." You all know that there may be white and ginger cats, for example. Now⁶⁶ the analytical judgment[s] pose no serious problem because, since they only spell out what is implied in the subject-concept, their truth or untruth is fully guaranteed by the principle of contradiction. You contradict yourself if you say there are bodies which are not extended. In the synthetic judgments, as we have seen in the case of the cats, the statement "Some cats are black" is not guaranteed by the principle of contradiction, because to say "Some cats are not black" is not a self-contradictory assertion. But it is vouched for by *experience*. We look around among cats and find that some cats are black. [LS taps on the table]

Now according to Kant's presentation, pre-Kantian philosophy admitted only these kinds of judgments. And then, for example, causality would of course have no basis because causality would not be an analytical judgment. That every event should have a cause is not an analytical [judgment]; there is no contradiction in asserting that there are events which have no cause. That was a point which Hume had made. Nor can it be based on experience, because experience can only tell us that as far as I have seen and I have investigated, I found that every event had a cause. But how few cases of events did we investigate? And therefore the universality of that proposition cannot be based on experience, a great difficulty which is still with us up to the present day. Now Kant therefore makes a distinction between two kinds of synthetic judgments: synthetic judgments which are derivative from experience ("some cats are black," no problem); and another kind of synthetic judgments, which are not derivative from experience and therefore can be universally valid for ever and ever. And⁶⁷ [those] are the synthetic judgments *a priori*, as Kant calls⁶⁸ [them]. And that is the key assertion, as we can say, of Kant. And in a way, the whole understanding of Kant's philosophy turns around this assertion: that there are synthetic judgments *a priori*. Now⁶⁹ you could read, for example, paragraph two in the *Prolegomena*.

Mr. Reinken: Page 51, Modern Library.

LS: Ya, we cannot read everything. But you may read it at home. And the corresponding passage in the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*—does Friedrich have that in⁷⁰ the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

Student: On page 24.

LS: I think that is it, thank you . . . Yes, yes. Page 24 following, in the Everyman's Library edition. That's the parallel to paragraph 2 of the *Prolegomena*. You might read that.

Now. So there are then according to Kant synthetic judgments *a priori* [LS taps on table]: judgments which are not merely *implied* in the concept of the subject, *nor* [are they] based on experience, but they have this peculiarity, that they are limited only to making possible the whole *sphere* of experience, what Kant calls the phenomenal world. We cannot understand and investigate phenomenal things without presupposing such synthetic judgments *a priori*. But on the other hand, the *application* of the synthetic judgments *a priori* is strictly limited to the phenomenal world. [In other words, physics, or natural science altogether, has a solid basis],⁷¹ contrary to Hume's assertion that⁷² the causality is derivative from some association of ideas and therefore doesn't have a solid ground. But metaphysics is impossible because metaphysics does not deal with the phenomenal world but with things transcending the phenomenal world. Kant calls it "things in themselves" as distinguished from the phenomena. So the *Critique of Pure Reason* both establishes and limits the competence of science. We might perhaps look at paragraph 36⁷³ of the *Prolegomena*, but it is too long.

Mr. Reinken:⁷⁴ Page 89?

LS:⁷⁵ Ya. Now read the heading first.

Mr. Reinken: "How is Nature itself Possible?"^{xxxvi}

LS: Yes. Now, and read then the end—which pages?

Mr. Reinken: "We must distinguish"?

LS: In the italics, the end,⁷⁶ which is stated—

Mr. Reinken:⁷⁷ "*The intellect does not derive its laws (a priori) from nature, but prescribes them to nature.*"^{xxxvii}

LS: Ya. That is the key assertion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a whole.⁷⁸ The very concept of nature originates in the human understanding.⁷⁹ Some of you who have read Nietzsche in the last quarter will remember Nietzsche's view that physics, modern physics, is only one interpretation of the world among many. This⁸⁰ presupposes Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant says, of course⁸¹ Newtonian physics is *the* interpretation of the world among many, but nature originates in human understanding. Nature is questioned by Kant in his theoretical philosophy, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And this leads to the questioning of human nature as the basis of ethics, as we will see by and by.

^{xxxvi} Ibid., 89.

^{xxxvii} Ibid., 91.

Now. But however important Hume was for Kant, there was another pre-Kantian thinker⁸² who was even more important for him. Metaphysics—the science of God, the soul and the world, as it was understood in Kant’s time—implies from the very beginning the view that the theoretical or contemplative life is the highest life. This was not admitted by Hume, naturally not, because there was no metaphysics for Hume. Nor was it admitted by Hobbes for similar reasons. But metaphysics implies this supremacy of the theoretical life. And now let us hear an utterance of Kant which suffers for credence from the fact that Kant never published this in his lifetime, but this was found among relatively early notes of Kant after his death. I will try to translate this from the German:

I am an enquirer [I don’t want to use the word “researcher” after the degradations this word has under[gone]⁸³ [laughter]—LS]. I am an enquirer from inclination. I feel the whole thirst for knowledge, and the greedy unrest to make advances in that, or also the contentedness at every progress. There was a time when I believed all this could make out the glory of mankind, and I despised the vulgar which knows of nothing [meaning, which has no theoretical interest of any kind. Now comes the key sentence—LS] Rousseau has brought me into the right shape. This imagined on blind preference [namely, of the inquirers above the non-inquirers—LS] disappears. I learned to honor men, and I would regard myself as much more useless than the common laborers if I did not believe that this reflection/consideration [in which he engages—LS] could give all others a value to restore, or to establish, the rights of mankind.^{xxxviii}

That’s a remarkable statement. And this obviously goes much further than the praise of Hume in the *Prolegomena*, which we have read.

Now Kant refers here implicitly to Rousseau’s so-called *First Discourse*,^{xxxix} in which Rousseau asserts that the progress of science and the arts has not contributed to the moral improvement of men but rather to the moral decay of men. The standard for Rousseau is here virtue, meaning moral virtue, or as he also says, the conscience; and therefore he questions the arts and sciences from the point of view of morality. The argument of this *First Discourse* is very complex and I cannot possibly state it here. I have tried to disentangle the various threads in *Natural Right and History*, pages 255-63.^{xl84} Rousseau is *the* man who⁸⁵ is responsible for the assertion of the supremacy of morality, and morality here understood (as is clear from the passage I quoted) as respect for the rights of mankind. According to Rousseau, however, morality is still based on metaphysics, and this seems to distinguish him from Kant.

^{xxxviii} Strauss translates from a note found in Kant’s copy of *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (trans. “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime”), which can be found in *Akademieausgabe von Immanuel Kants Gesammelten Werken* (hereafter “Ak.”), 20:44.

^{xxxix} Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750).

^{xl} Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 255-263.

Rousseau says himself that his greatest and best work is the *Emile, or On Education*.^{xli} In that work,⁸⁶ in the beginning of the second half of it, there occurs a section called “The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar”—the Vicar⁸⁷ [from] Savoy. Now there,⁸⁸ this Vicar gives a proof of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will. And from these fundamental verities of a metaphysical nature, the Vicar deduces maxims for his conduct and rules which he must prescribe to himself in order to fulfill his destiny on earth according to the will of God. Yet these rules, as well as the premises from which they are derived, do not stem from⁸⁹ a “quote unquote high philosophy,” but they are engraved in the heart of men by nature, in the conscience as distinguished from reason. There are innate principles of justice and virtue.⁹⁰ [These] have the character of sentiments. In contradistinction to judgments or ideas which come from without, sentiments come from within; they are matters of faith. Without faith, no genuine virtue; it’s explicitly stated. There are lovers by nature of the beautiful, virtue, doing well, the common good, or to the whole whose center is God in contradistinction to⁹¹ self-interest. There are pleasures of the soul in contradistinction to the pleasure of the senses. Now this Vicar who makes this long speech teaches⁹² natural religion as distinguished from positive or revealed religion. He rejects positive religion insofar as positive religion claims to be of divine origin and obligatory for all men. In other words, in a subsidiary fashion he has nothing against that.

There are also other heresies committed by the Vicar. For example,⁹³ he doubts that the world was created out of nothing, he questions the reasonableness of prayer, etc., etc. Yet this man is outwardly a Catholic priest who keeps his faith, or his infidelity, secret.⁹⁴ His faith is based not on reason, but on the heart or on sentiment. And⁹⁵ it is admittedly exposed to insoluble objections, but the heart and the sentiment is so strong that it is not affected by these objections. But the most important consideration, perhaps, is this: Is the profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar Rousseau’s *own* profession of faith? That Rousseau and the author are different men. I say only one word about the context. *Emile*, an ordinary man, *homme vulgaire*, has been brought up by Rousseau and has never heard the very word “God” throughout his childhood, because nothing should be said which the boy doesn’t understand from his own experience.⁹⁶ And then he reaches sexual maturity, and then the question arises: Will he be able to withstand the torrent of passion on the basis of these principles of conduct which he acquired as a non-mature human being? And in this context religion (and its sanction) is introduced. So this much about the very⁹⁷ questionable character which⁹⁸ the metaphysics has acquired already in Rousseau. I cannot go further into that.

I must, however, say something more about Rousseau, and not so much about the Savoyard Vicar as about the *Social Contract*.^{xlii} I will do this next time, because without some inkling of what Rousseau was after, one does not have⁹⁹ a proper access to Kant. And I will do that next time.

¹ Deleted “and...”

² Deleted “Now that is...”

^{xli} Rousseau, *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762).

^{xlii} Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social ou Principes du droit politique* (1762).

³ Deleted “you would have to try to get hold of the independent, I mean, the....”

⁴ Deleted “which....”

⁵ Deleted “is....”

⁶ Deleted “as long.”

⁷ Deleted: “And now let us begin. Yes,⁷ there is one point: papers. Most of you know the rules. Papers should be about 20 minutes long, and that means 7 double-spaced typewritten pages, if delivered at a reasonable speed. Otherwise, you will be through much earlier [LS chuckles] of course. And yes, and you are perfectly free⁷ to give a report about the whole section or to concentrate on one or two points of special importance. But in the latter case, you take the risk that your judgment might not be the best, and then⁷ this would show in your grade, I’m sorry to say. But on the other hand it is a noble venture [laughter] and therefore to be encouraged. Yes,⁷ the legislator sometimes forgets to mention things because they are unbelievable, unforeseeable. I have had the experience last quarter that a student registered for this course, read a paper, came to one meeting when he read the paper, and never appeared again. Now the idea of a seminar, of course, is that it is an instruction, and not merely an instruction of the teacher by the student who reads the paper, but the other way around. Now therefore, I have now to add this corollary: that you are supposed⁷ to attend the meetings and contribute to class discussion within the limits of your health, weather, and the like. Good. Now, I think I have now stated the rules, and we can turn to our discussion.”

⁸ Deleted “everyone about.”

⁹ Deleted “is.”

¹⁰ Deleted “the....”

¹¹ Deleted “for.”

¹² Deleted “the...that will....”

¹³ Deleted “yet....”

¹⁴ Deleted “And, and they.”

¹⁵ Deleted “And why...and human excellence which.”

¹⁶ Deleted “Liberalism.”

¹⁷ Deleted “Progressive is....”

¹⁸ Deleted “in England.”

¹⁹ Deleted “where.”

²⁰ Deleted “twentieth.”

²¹ Deleted “this....”

²² Deleted “in....”

²³ Deleted “He....”

²⁴ Deleted “that.”

²⁵ Deleted “their...their desire for, say their....”

²⁶ Deleted “that is.”

²⁷ Deleted “In other....”

²⁸ Deleted “and....”

²⁹ Deleted “my....”

³⁰ Deleted “did was...or.”

³¹ Deleted “Value....”

³² Deleted “it.”

³³ Deleted “which go by the....”

³⁴ Deleted “a....”

³⁵ Deleted “which....”

³⁶ Deleted “Can...let....”

³⁷ Deleted “the...read.”

³⁸ Deleted “**Reinken:** ‘Architectonic of Pure Reason.’ **LS:** No no no. No no. Did they omit anything?”

³⁹ Deleted “**LS:** Read that. Read it. **Reinken:** This title— **LS:** No, no, read the title again. **LS and Reader together:** ‘The History of Pure Reason.’”

⁴⁰ Deleted “to say, that we...imaginable.”

⁴¹ Moved “or Aristotle.” Deleted “of a history.”

⁴² Deleted “for there is no....”

⁴³ Deleted “**Reinken:** ‘If anything is to receive the title—’ **LS:** No, no, the—”

⁴⁴ Deleted “the...”

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- ⁴⁵ Deleted “Now, you see here the great difference...yes? **Student:** Could you please give that reference again? **LS:** Metaphysics 1074B, 1 to 14...lines 1 to 14.”
- ⁴⁶ Deleted “and....”
- ⁴⁷ Deleted “E....”
- ⁴⁸ Deleted “So Aristotle’s view is....”
- ⁴⁹ Deleted “that is....”
- ⁵⁰ Deleted “a history of pure, and.”
- ⁵¹ Deleted “causes.”
- ⁵² Deleted “that there are only four, well....”
- ⁵³ Deleted “more....”
- ⁵⁴ Deleted “whether that.”
- ⁵⁵ Deleted “by....”
- ⁵⁶ Deleted “fearing.”
- ⁵⁷ Deleted “with....”
- ⁵⁸ Deleted “the.”
- ⁵⁹ Deleted “of...of....”
- ⁶⁰ Deleted “he.”
- ⁶¹ Deleted “on.”
- ⁶² Deleted “tribute.”
- ⁶³ Deleted “we can’t....”
- ⁶⁴ Deleted “Now let us....”
- ⁶⁵ Deleted “you have it.”
- ⁶⁶ Deleted “but, what....”
- ⁶⁷ Deleted “that.”
- ⁶⁸ Deleted “it.”
- ⁶⁹ Deleted “what....”
- ⁷⁰ Deleted “The...the...from.”
- ⁷¹ Changed from “In other words, physics is...has a solid basis (or natural science altogether), has a solid basis.”
- ⁷² Deleted “since...the....”
- ⁷³ Deleted “of the....”
- ⁷⁴ Deleted “I was....”
- ⁷⁵ Deleted “Thirty.”
- ⁷⁶ Deleted “which is the....”
- ⁷⁷ Deleted “Oh, *last* thing.”
- ⁷⁸ Deleted “*Nature* is not something which...nature....”
- ⁷⁹ Deleted “You remember.”
- ⁸⁰ Deleted “is....”
- ⁸¹ Deleted “physics is *the*....”
- ⁸² Deleted “for....”
- ⁸³ Changed from “underwent”
- ⁸⁴ Deleted “According to Rousseau...so.”
- ⁸⁵ Deleted “has....”
- ⁸⁶ Deleted “in the second....”
- ⁸⁷ Deleted “of....”
- ⁸⁸ Deleted “the....”
- ⁸⁹ Strauss says “quote” and “unquote” aloud.
- ⁹⁰ Deleted “there are....”
- ⁹¹ Deleted “the.”
- ⁹² Deleted “natural religion [inaudible word].”
- ⁹³ Deleted “he....”
- ⁹⁴ Deleted “The faith....”
- ⁹⁵ Deleted “he....”

⁹⁶ Changed from “Emile, an...an ordinary man, *homme vulgaire*, who has never...has been brought up by Rousseau, and has never heard the very word ‘God’ throughout his childhood, and not because nothing...it should be said which the boy who doesn’t understand from his own experience.”

⁹⁷ Deleted “doubtful character of....”

⁹⁸ Deleted “the....”

⁹⁹ Deleted “an access.”

Session 2: April 6, 1967

Leo Strauss: I explained last time that we are planning to discuss Kant and history, or Kant and the philosophy of history—and more precisely: What is it that prevents Kant from making philosophy of history a part of his system? This question is all the more urgent since philosophy of history has occupied Kant's thought, as you see from¹ some of the titles of the essays in this volume which I put on the reading list.

But before we can settle this question or state it more precisely, we have to have a general notion of what Kant's concern is. What is the concern peculiar to Kant? We will get a first inkling of this by listening to what he says on the two older contemporaries to whom he owed most, and these men were Hume and Rousseau. Of Hume he said that he had awakened him from the dogmatic slumber. And² Hume had done this by questioning the rational character of the principle of causality, and therewith the rational character of science. Kant's reply has this general character. There are a kind of judgments which have never been seen as such: the synthetic judgments *a priori*. And the principle of causality, together with other principles of this kind, belong to these fundamental judgments *a priori*. These judgments are universally and necessarily valid for all possible experience, but *only* for all possible experience. Therefore science is possible as a radically rational pursuit, whereas theoretical metaphysics is impossible because it goes beyond the limit of all possible experience. Now I add³ the epithet "theoretical." It is in a way redundant: metaphysics is by its nature theoretical, and the metaphysics which Kant has in mind⁴ is in particular the doctrine of God, the world, and the soul. But⁵ I use the term, the adjective "theoretical" in an anticipatory way, because Kant asserts that metaphysics is possible on a practical, moral basis.

And this brings me to the second of these great men to whom Kant refers: Rousseau. Of Rousseau, Kant says that he had brought him into the right shape, which is something more than awakening him from the dogmatic slumber. Now Rousseau had questioned what has been taken for granted by the whole tradition of metaphysics, the supremacy of the theoretical life, and asserted the supremacy of the moral or practical life—a key point in Kant's thought, as we will see very soon. There is a very long question into which I cannot go now: whether there have ever been thinkers who asserted the supremacy of the moral life prior to Kant. The name of Socrates will come to mind almost immediately. I cannot go into that now. The question which we have to address to Rousseau especially [is]: What is the basis of the supremacy of the moral life? After all, the mere assertion will not help. We receive an answer from Rousseau's most explicit and lengthy metaphysical statement, the Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar. Here indeed we find that morality is derived from metaphysics, i.e., theoretical metaphysics; but this theoretical metaphysics is greatly modified and mollified. It is no longer that proud science taught at universities but something rather humble, located in the heart of everyone rather than in the intellect. Now this solution was of course⁶ [unacceptable] to Kant, because it left the status⁷ of metaphysics wholly unclear. Yet Rousseau delineated an alternative in his *Social Contract*, and this alternative we have to discuss very briefly. I mentioned toward the end of the last class that it is very doubtful whether one can identify the Savoyard Vicar and his profession of faith with Rousseau. After all,⁸ the

Savoyard Vicar is a character of Rousseau, and not Rousseau. That is⁹ as if you would say Hamlet is Shakespeare, or something else. There are other reasons which make it doubtful. And therefore¹⁰ let us consider briefly the *Social Contract*.

Now in “The Profession of Faith” it was made clear that there is a radical difference between self-love and love of the whole, or love of order. The whole could be the society, and it would be ultimately the universe. The social contract is based unmistakably on self-love alone, in the form of self-preservation. Rousseau simply follows here Hobbes, and just as in Hobbes,¹¹ self-preservation is understood as most clearly visible as it were, in all its implications, in the state of nature—also a Hobbean thought. The state of nature, the state antedating all human institutions is according to Hobbes presocial but rational. These are rational creatures who have not yet made the social contract. According to Rousseau, however, man in the state of nature, because he is presocial is also prerational. As he calls him, he is a “stupid animal.”

Now this creates this great difficulty: How can natural right, the right belonging to the state of nature, be *the* standard of human action if man in the state of nature is a stupid animal? Rousseau would probably have an answer to this question along these lines:¹² the desire for self-preservation affects or determines, of course, all living beings, not only men. But¹³ whereas all living beings are concerned above all with self-preservation, man alone can *know* this and therefore try consistently to *act* on that principle, which brutes cannot do. However this may be, there is another difference between Rousseau and Hobbes of which Rousseau was fully aware, and we should read that. Here, I have the English translation. Mr. Reinken? The *Social Contract* 1, part 1, chapter 6.ⁱ

Mr. Reinken: “Concerning the Social Pact”?

LS: Ya, of the *Social Contract*. Now¹⁴ Rousseau gives here in the fourth paragraph a formula which the *Social Contract* has to solve. Will you read this, please?

Mr. Reinken:

This difficult question may be restated, in terms¹⁵ appropriate to my inquiry, as follows: [quote—R] “Is a method of associating discoverable which will defend and protect, with all the collective might, the person and property of each associate, and in virtue of which each associate, though he becomes a member of the group, nevertheless obeys only himself, and remains as free as before?”ⁱⁱ

LS: So in other words, by becoming a member of society he should remain as free as he was in the state of nature. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This is the problem, a basic one, for which the social contract provides the solution.

ⁱ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Willmoore Kendall (Chicago: The Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 13.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

The terms of this contract are dictated by the nature of the transaction, and in such fashion that modifying them in any way would render them nugatory and without effect; they are, therefore, everywhere the same, everywhere tacitly accepted and recognized, though nowhere perhaps have they been systematically formulated. Whence it follows that each individual immediately resumes his primitive rights, surprising as this may seem, when any violation of the social pact occurs; i.e., he recovers his natural freedom, and thereby loses the contractual freedom for which he renounced it.

The contract's terms reduce themselves, when clearly grasped, to a single stipulation, namely: the total alienation to the whole community of each associate, together with every last one of his rights. The reasons for this are as follows: each gives himself completely, so that, in the first place, this stipulation places an equal burden upon everybody; and nobody, for that very reason, has any interest in making it burdensome for others.

The alienation is made without reservations, so that, in the second place, no more perfect union is possible, and no associate has any subsequent demand to make *upon the others*. For if the individual retained any rights whatever, this is what would happen: There being no common superior able to say the last word on any issue between him and the public, he would be his own judge in this or that point, and so would try before long to be his own judge on all points. The state of nature would thus persist; and the association would necessarily become useless, if not tyrannical.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Ya, tyrannical or useless. All right, let us stop here. Now here the difference between Rousseau and Hobbes is crucial, for Hobbes preserves the natural liberty of the subjects in the civil state after the social contract is made: *Leviathan*, chapter 21. And Rousseau demands that there is a complete surrender of all rights and forces of every individual to society, for which he has been called a totalitarian. (Whether this is fair or not we will see later.) Rousseau's point is this: if you preserve rights, natural rights within society against society, as Hobbes and of course Locke too had said, then¹⁶ you have in principle a state of anarchy, because then you will be the judge also of your natural rights and your judgment may disagree with that of society.

The only way out according to Rousseau is to construct society *according* to natural right, so that there will be no appeal possible *to* natural right. Society cannot possibly infringe¹⁷ on the rights of man, and therefore a complete reconciliation of the individual and society is achieved. A society constructed according to natural right is one in which everyone [who] is subject to the law, to the positive law, must have a say in the making of the law. Say, in an absolute monarchy, no one except the king (and he is not strictly speaking subject to the law)¹⁸ has a right in the making of the law.¹⁹ In qualified republics many people are subject to the law without having had a say in the making of the law.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., 13-14.

But in a democracy and especially in a direct democracy, which Rousseau has in mind, there is no one who has not had his say in the making of the law who is supposed to be subject to the law.²⁰

And Rousseau²¹ leads up to quite extraordinary statements. For example,²² in part 2, chapter 3, the key point is this (and Rousseau must not say less than that without contradicting himself blatantly): In such a society there *cannot* be unjust laws. Well,²³ Hobbes said the same, but Hobbes could not consistently maintain it because he was forced to make a distinction between, let us say, inequitable laws and unjust laws.²⁴ Every law is just, but some laws may be inequitable. Now this is a verbal solution and a semantic solution, as I'd say, and not a solution at all. Now Rousseau said—do you have [the] chapter? Well, I can read it.

Mr. Reinken: In book 2.

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

It follows from the above that the general will is always well-intentioned, i.e., *that it* always looks to the public good. It does not follow, however, that the people's deliberations are invariably and to the same extent what they ought to be. Men always will what is good for them, but do not always see what is good for them. The people is never corrupted, but is frequently misinformed. And only when it is misinformed does it give the appearance of willing what is bad *for it*.

It often happens that the will of everybody, because it is looking to private interest and is *thus* merely a sum of particular wills, is something quite different from the general will, which looks exclusively to the common interest.^{iv}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Thank you very much.²⁵ Rousseau admits here that there is, even under the best conditions, a tension between the private good and the common good. Calculation may tell me that I could not preserve myself in the state of nature as well as I can preserve myself within society. But²⁶ there are all kinds of complications. For example, quite a few people are trying to defraud the government of taxes, although they know very well that without taxes there would not be police and so on.²⁷ So the tension between the private good and the common good remains. Now let us read, regarding this point, the first part of the *Social Contract*, chapter 8.

Mr. Reinken:

Concerning the Civil State. THE TRANSITION from the state of nature to the civil state produces a quite remarkable transformation within man—i.e., it

^{iv} Ibid., 28.

substitutes justice for instinct *as the controlling factor* in his behavior, and confers upon his actions a moral significance that they have—^v

LS: No, no. That's "*the* morality, which they lacked before." In other words, men in the state of nature did not have morality. That comes into being only with the emergence of civil society. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Only when this transformation has come about does the voice of duty take the place of physical motivation, and law that of appetite. Only then, therefore, does man, who hitherto has considered himself alone, find himself obliged to act on other principles—^{vi}

LS: Forced, forced, forced.

Mr. Reinken: Forced.

LS: Because "obliged" has a certain moral connotation which "forced" does not necessarily have, ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before he heeds his desires.

In the civil state man foregoes, to be sure, numerous benefits that he has been enjoying as grants from nature. So great, however, are the benefits that he acquires in their stead—such is the extent to which his faculties are mobilized and developed, such the degree to which his concepts are broadened and his sentiments ennobled, such the level to which his soul is lifted up—that *we are justified in saying this*: if only the abuses associated with his new condition did not often reduce him to a condition even lower than the state of nature, he would have to bless incessantly the happy moment that has snatched him, once and for all, from that state, and made out of a stupid and dull-witted animal an intelligent being and a man.^{vii}

LS: So great is the difference between the civil state and nature. He was not yet a man before, and the most important thing which he acquired is morality, because previously he was concerned only with his own good and that is not immoral but amoral or premoral. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

^v Ibid., 19.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

Let us reduce the items on each side of the ledger to terms easy to compare: Man loses, through the social contract, his natural liberty, along with an unlimited right to anything that he is tempted by and can get.^{viii}

LS: So that is what Hobbes says, then. You know?²⁸ This right men have in the state of nature. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

He gains civil liberty, along with ownership of all he possesses. Lest we fail to grasp the extent of his gains, *however*, we must distinguish sharply between natural liberty, which is limited only by the individual's own powers, and civil liberty, which is limited by the general will—^{ix}

LS: The general will which expresses itself in laws. Positive laws. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

as also between possession, which rests either upon might or upon the right of the first occupant, and ownership, which can have no basis other than positive title.^x

LS: Positive title: title derivative from positive law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Nor is that all: One might add to the gains from the civil state *that of* moral freedom, in the absence of—^{xi}

LS: "Moral liberty," in contradistinction to natural and civil liberty. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

in the absence of which nothing can make man truly his own master. For just as motivation by sheer appetite is slavery, so obedience to self-imposed law is liberty.^{xii}

LS: Yes. Let us leave it here. So that is the formula, fertile in consequence, which will recur with very great emphasis in Kant. Obedience to the law which one has prescribed to oneself, this is liberty. In a way this is also true of civil liberty insofar as²⁹ in a decent civil society, you are subject only to laws to the making of which you have contributed. But we know this is not necessarily true because you may be voted down. But in a formal way,³⁰ the same could be said to be of civil liberty.³¹ We remember this point: there is no moral freedom³² or no morality in the state of nature.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid., 19-20.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Ibid.

Now³³ how does this work out in civil society itself? Ordinary calculation of our advantages will induce us to join civil society. But how are we going to behave in civil society? How are we going to act as citizens? Now *the* act of the citizens, the fundamental acts throughout civil society are the acts of legislation. How are we going to vote: for or against the bill? And why is this voting for a bill of such crucial importance? Now let us take a simple example. Someone proposes a law abolishing or prohibiting all taxes, or rates or what have you, and our self-interest is surely in favor of it: "I don't want to pay no taxes." [Laughter] But then I make a simple reflection. I say: "But, if no one were to pay taxes,³⁴ [how] could we have hospitals, roads, and so on and so on?"

Now what do I do in this simple and commonsensical step? I have transformed³⁵ my desire into a proposed law. I have given the object of my desire the form of a law. Then it is no longer, "I don't want to pay taxes," but "*No* one . . . pay taxes." And this awakens me from my slumber, from my egoistic slumber, and then I say: "Oh no," [to] whatever it was. So this is the key point.³⁶ We begin to think morally in the moment we think of the objects of desire in terms of a universal law. Here we don't need any other principles of natural law, natural inclinations, and what have you. The mere formal act of universalization, or rather generalization of our desires makes clear the irrationality of many of our desires and therewith the immorality of them. This³⁷ is of crucial importance for Kant's moral doctrine. The form of law guarantees the rationality of law. But as Rousseau will make clear in his book (we cannot read that now), this is not quite sufficient: some other conditions have to be fulfilled, and they are stated at length in the *Social Contract*.³⁸ We would have to give a seminar on the *Social Contract*. We cannot read this now.

Now let us return to Kant. Let us cast a glance at Kant's critique of metaphysics and therefore at the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Now first the plan of the work, to get a very crude notion of what it is about.³⁹

Student: . . .

LS: Well, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as you see if we disregard the Introduction, consists of two chief parts: first (as it is here translated), "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements," and then "Transcendental Doctrine of Method."⁴⁰ The former is by far the larger part. The "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" is subdivided into two parts,⁴¹ "Transcendental Aesthetic" and "Transcendental Logic." And the "Logic" is subdivided into "Transcendental Analytic" and "Transcendental Dialectic." And the sections which we⁴² will⁴³ discuss first⁴⁴ today, [are] taken from the "Transcendental Dialectic."

Now one question arises immediately: What does "transcendental" mean? And this is obviously the key term here. Now Kant uses the term "transcendental" frequently synonymously with "transcendent," and then it means simply transcending the sensual world. But nevertheless he makes a distinction between "transcendental" and "transcendent," and this distinctive meaning of "transcendental" is the only one of importance to us. Now let us read.⁴⁵ I have the reference to the Modern Library edition,

[pages]⁴⁶ 36 to 37. When he says, “I call all knowledge transcendental,” do you have that? Here: “I entitle ‘transcendental’.”

Mr. Reinken: This is section 7:

The Idea and Division of the Special Science, under the Title, “Critique of Pure Reason.”

I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects, as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*. A system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy.^{xiii}

LS: That is enough for our purpose now. So in other words, “transcendental”⁴⁷ is not the knowledge of objects which has to do with objects like physics, medicine, or what have you, but which has to do with our mode of knowing objects insofar as that knowledge is supposed to be *a priori*. So it does not deal with our knowledge *a posteriori*, the empirical knowledge of objects. This is the first definition which Kant gives. We see already from here that the sphere of the transcendental is for all practical purposes identical with that of the synthetic judgments *a priori*.

One can explain what Kant means with a term not used by Kant but stemming somehow from the Kantian tradition. The transcendental knowledge is the knowledge of the fundamental *project* originating in the human mind, by virtue of which we can organize, let us say, sense data so that they make sense. This is the key theme of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but with the understanding that for Kant himself it was still a question whether there cannot be metaphysics as a science consisting of judgments, synthetic judgments *a priori*, and Kant has to show the impossibility of that metaphysics. And this is the function of that division called “Transcendental Dialectics.” The distinction between analytics and dialectics goes back to Aristotle, but⁴⁸ in Kant’s view dialectics has a much lower status than it has in Aristotle, and it⁴⁹ can be compared to the status of sophistry in Aristotle. But it is not a sophistry of the way Aristotle discusses, something arbitrary, but the natural sophistry of the human mind.⁵⁰ The critique of metaphysics deals with three ideas of reason. “Idea” in Kant does not mean what it meant in Descartes and Locke and Hume and so on, but it had reacquired something of the Platonic meaning. I will perhaps say a word about that . . .

There is an old distinction between the understanding and reason [LS writes on the blackboard]. In Latin *intellect* and reason *ratio*; now in Greek that is *nous* and *theōria*. This is the Platonic-Aristotelian distinction, we can say. There is a kind of intellectual intuition, if one can say that, a grasp of ideas to take the simple Platonic example. That is *nous*, the understanding. And then there is a faculty in man which operates with these insights and also with sensible things known through sense perception: reasoning. In Kant (and not only in Kant, arguably)⁵¹ the understanding is the higher, and that has been completely changed.⁵² In order to understand that change, the simplest way would be to look [at] Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, chapter[s] 4 and 5, [at] what Hobbes says there about understanding and reason.⁵³ Well, let’s take the Hobbesian case. Understanding has⁵⁴

^{xiii} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B25.

[nothing] to do with any *ideas* or *eidē* ([in the] Platonic or Aristotelian sense), but with notions, concepts, ultimately words. And this is of course nothing to be proud of. That is only a tool for understanding and not true understanding. The genuine, valuable understanding is that which comes from the use of these tools, and that is reason, so that reason has a much higher status.

Now Kant accepts this modern view, and for Kant reason is higher than understanding. The understanding is by its nature limited to the field of experience, sense experience, but reason transcends that. Now this transcendence is not in every respect a fault. It is even *necessary* to transcend, and that is what Kant means when he speaks of *ideas* of reason. These ideas have a certain function but not a directly cognitive function. The function of the ideas of reason is much clearer in the moral field, as we will see, but they also have some function in the theoretical field.

So now there are three ideas of reason⁵⁵ according to Kant.⁵⁶ [On]⁵⁷ page 391B—ya, we cannot possibly read that—I will only mention this, that these three ideas of reason led, prior to Kant (as Kant asserts), to three alleged sciences: rational psychology (i.e., not empirical psychology), cosmology, and theology. And therefore Kant is compelled to engage in a critique of rational psychology (for all practical purposes a proof of the immortality of the soul), rational cosmology, and rational theology (the doctrine of God). Now in the case of rational psychology and rational theology, the situation is relatively simple. Pure reason cannot prove the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.⁵⁸ Kant tries to show the weakness of the demonstrations. That is a clear-cut situation because it implies already that while theoretical reason cannot prove the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are possible assertions. Reason, theoretical reason, cannot establish them, but for the same reason it cannot refute these things.

Much graver is the situation in the case of rational cosmology, because in this case we arrive at antimonies, meaning that two contradictory theses which we must make are both demonstrable. Let us look at the formulation of the antimonies. The first is on page 454B.⁵⁹

Mr. Reinken: “First Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas. Thesis: The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.”^{xiv}

LS: “Antithesis.”

Mr. Reinken: Yes. “The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.”^{xv}

LS: So you see that in each case Kant adds a demonstration, and according to Kant’s assertion both incompatible theses are demonstrable; and here the weakness of theoretical

^{xiv} Ibid., B454.

^{xv} Ibid.

reason becomes particularly manifest, of course. Now let us look at the formulation of the other antimonies. Page [B]462.

Mr. Reinken: Ah.

Second Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas. Thesis: Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing anywhere exists save the simple or what is composed of the simple. Antithesis: No composite thing in the world is made up of simple parts, and there nowhere exists in the world anything simple.^{xvi}

LS: Yes, and now the⁶⁰ next is page [B]472 to 73.

Mr. Reinken: Third.

Thesis: Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances of the world can be one and all derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom. Antithesis: There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with the laws of nature.^{xvii}

LS: And finally, the fourth, page [B]480.

Mr. Reinken:

Thesis: There belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary.^{xviii}

LS: That would be God, of course, ya.

Mr. Reinken:

Antithesis: An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause.^{xix}

LS: Yes. So this section is of special interest for the reason given, because here the radical weakness of theoretical reason appears most clearly because theoretical reason, in perfectly legitimate steps in genuine demonstrations, proves two contradictory assertions. And therefore there must be something wrong with theoretical reason *in this sphere*, which Kant will explain.

Now Kant, before he turns to a more detailed discussion, speaks⁶¹ on page [B]490 of the *interest* of reason in this conflict of itself.⁶² Read the heading.

Mr. Reinken: “The Interest of Reason in These Conflicts.”^{xx}

^{xvi} Ibid., B462.

^{xvii} Ibid., B472-473.

^{xviii} Ibid., B480.

^{xix} Ibid., B481.

^{xx} Ibid., B490.

LS: No, no, singular.⁶³

Mr. Reinken: “This conflict.”

LS: In this conflict,⁶⁴ ya.⁶⁵ What Kant means by this question of the “interest” of reason will appear from the paper to be read now by Mr. Bruell. Now what should we—^{xxi}

How long did it take Kant to write the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

Mr. Bruell: 14 years?⁶⁶

LS: Ya—well, to *think* it. And . . . perhaps even more. But to write it?

Mr. Bruell: Five months.

LS: About five months. So in other words, Kant did not write with that extreme care—^{xxii} Secondly,⁶⁷ the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781; the second in '87, if my memory is correct, and considerable corrections have been made there. Such a work like the *Critique of Judgment*, which appeared in 1790, the idea of that occurred to Kant only about 1787, '88. This work of Kant was not planned, laid out from the beginning, in which the work of Plato may very well have been laid out at the beginning of his literary activity. So that [is] a general remark. Good. Now let us try to discover.

What Kant does here is this: [he] gives explicitly an impartial discussion of the two parties. The word is also used, but an impartial discussion, meaning he compares himself at the end to a jurymen who is not convinced in advance that Speck murdered the nurses^{xxiii} or did not murder the nurses, but impartially he listens to the evidence.⁶⁸ That means of course, as became very clear from Mr. Bruell's paper, that the four antimonies, the four theses and the four antitheses, belong together. In other words, you cannot have, say, thesis number 1 combined with antithesis number 3, and this kind of thing. They are either/or. They hang together. And the two parties have a very different mood. Mr. Bruell referred to the passage—how does he say: “the coldness of the one side” and the other are “zealous,” hot.^{xxiv} So there are two human temperaments as it were which express themselves in both, or reflect themselves in both theses. The first is called the “dogmatism of pure reason” and the other is called the “pure empiricism,” pure empiricism meaning the denial of every knowledge by pure reason. Only empirical knowledge is possible.

Now what speaks in favor of the dogmatism of pure reason?⁶⁹ You must not forget in fairness to Kant that is only a provisional consideration; precisely because Kant wants to

^{xxi} Mr. Bruell reads his paper. The reading was not recorded. When the tape resumes, Strauss is commenting on Bruell's paper.

^{xxii} There is a brief gap in the tape here.

^{xxiii} Richard Speck murdered eight student nurses in Chicago on July 14, 1966.

^{xxiv} Ibid., B493.

have an impartial or unbiased investigation, he wants to have clarity about his biases! That is [what] he's trying to do here. But he thinks that these are not only *his* biases but the biases of every sane or sensible man. Now what speaks in favor of the dogmatism of pure reason is that it supports morality and religion. Secondly, it is speculatively attractive; and thirdly, it is popular, and which means that—

Empiricism on the other hand has only one, for Kant, very important recommendation. It is in agreement with the spirit of natural science.⁷⁰ And for Kant natural science is a perfection of our natural understanding, *the* perfection. It demands empiricism. Kant says, however (I do not know whether you have pointed that out), that empiricism as such leaves room for morality and religion. Let us consider that. Do you know where the passage is? Ya? The real empiricist who says: "I want to investigate nature according to the inherent laws of such an investigation" leaves [men] as such, of course,⁷¹ freedom to think non-empirically about matters which are not subject to natural science, such as morality and religion. But unfortunately empiricism itself becomes dogmatic and therefore denies that there is any rationality outside of science. Now let us read this passage, the sentence on the bottom of page [B]499.⁷²

Mr. Reinken: "The contrast between the teaching of Epicurus and that of Plato—"xxv

LS: Kant simply says: "This is the contrast of Epicureanism against Platonism." Yes, and then a note, a footnote . . .

Mr. Reinken:

It is, however, open to question whether Epicurus ever propounded these principles as objective assertions. If perhaps they were for him nothing more than maxims for the speculative employment of reason, then he showed in this regard a more genuine philosophical spirit than any other of the philosophers of antiquity.^{xxvi}

LS: What a praise—imagine, ya? Of Epicurus, of all people. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

That, in explaining the appearances, we must proceed as if the field of our enquiry were not circumscribed by any limit or beginning of the world; that we must assume the material composing the world to be such as it must be if we are to learn about it from experience; that we must postulate no other road of the production of events than one which will enable them to be [regarded as] determined through unalterable laws of nature; and finally that no use must be made of any cause distinct from the world—all these principles still [retain their value]. They are very sound principles (though seldom observed) for extending the scope of speculative philosophy, while—^{xxvii}

^{xxv} Ibid., B499.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} Ibid., B499-500. Brackets in original.

LS: “Speculative philosophy” is still used in a very loose sense, the same as “speculative science.” Theoretical science. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

while at the same time [enabling us] to discover the principles of morality without depending for this discovery upon alien [i.e., non-moral, theoretical]—^{xxviii}

LS: No, this is an impudent addition of Kemp Smith.

Mr. Reinken: Ah. “Theoretical.”

LS: Of “alien—”

Mr. Reinken: “Alien sources.”

LS: “Alien” means here, as Mr. Bruell understood it, a revealed law. Not human. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

and it does not follow in the least that those who require us, so long as we are occupied with mere speculations, to *ignore* these dogmatic propositions^{xxix} can justly be accused of wishing to deny them.^{xxx}

LS: In other words, a natural scientist who does not take cognizance of any divine interventions—miracles or what have you, or creation of the world—in his capacity as a natural scientist cannot⁷³ for this reason be accused⁷⁴ [of being] an atheist. Which today is of course elementary, but was not so elementary in Kant’s time.

Now here this is a point: Kant illustrates what he means by this opposition of empiricism and dogmatism by identifying empiricism with Epicurus and dogmatism with Plato. Now I think this identification of dogmatism with Plato we have seen repeated by Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and is very plausible at first glance. But as for Epicurus it is quite strange⁷⁵ because if one knows a *bit* of Epicurus, Epicurus taught the *freedom* of the will in the doctrine⁷⁶ of the declination of atoms, so that all atoms, and therefore also the atoms constituting our minds, have an irreducible, inexplicable power to change their courses and some other things. And of course Epicurus never meant these assertions about the eternity of the world—or the universe, rather—and the infinity of the universe, as mere fundamental hypotheses. But [that] he meant them, to quote Kant’s words, as “objective assertions,” there can be no doubt.

But Kant could rightly say he’s not an historian of philosophy; that was done by a fellow called Bröcker in Germany at that time.^{xxxi} And who is interested in these boring things

^{xxviii} Ibid., B500. Brackets in original.

^{xxix} In original: “[that there is a limit and a beginning to the world, a Divine Cause, etc.]”

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxi} Possibly Ludwig Oscar Bröcker (1814-1895), German historian.

should read these boring histories [Strauss chuckles], and not, that is clear. But nevertheless, it is interesting—the good press, as it were, which Epicurus gets here because this was a great part of the development since the seventeenth century from Bacon on: that Epicurus,⁷⁷ who had had a very bad press throughout the tradition now suddenly was rediscovered, so much so that a man like Spinoza could say: The authority of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle does not carry any weight with me. The case is different with Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius.^{xxxii} And this is a very important part of modernity, and⁷⁸ it is good always to remind ourselves of that. But perhaps one can say Kant idealizes Epicurus, idealizes in Kant's sense.⁷⁹ Whether Epicurus would have regarded this as an improvement is another question.⁸⁰

I believe it would be more simple to say that the opposition which Kant has in mind is that of materialism and spiritualism.⁸¹ But Kant replaces, as it were, materialism by empiricism,⁸² whereas the primary alternative is that of materialism and spiritualism. Now this is⁸³ very clearly stated, this fundamental alternative, in Plato's *Laws*. I'll give you the passages so that you can read them up.⁸⁴ *Laws*, book 10, 888e to 890a, 891c, 892a to c.⁸⁵ Plato, or the Athenian Stranger, makes the distinction as follows: there are people who assert the supremacy of body, of the four elements—atoms or what have you. This is the one school. And the other school is the one which asserts the supremacy of the soul as distinct from the body. And⁸⁶ what Kant says here [is] that the one position, supremacy of body, is unfavorable to morality and religion; and the second, spiritualism, is favorable to it. But he doesn't make any assertions regarding popularity there.

We can perhaps say that the ultimate opposition which is intended by these terms is this: whether the highest in man is akin to the highest simply, or whether it is not akin to it. Now let us assume the highest in man is reason, and then if God is the cause of everything, there is obviously a kinship between the highest in man and God as the most intelligent being. On the other hand, if the highest (meaning in the sense of the cause of everything) are blind atoms moving aimlessly, then the highest in man is obviously not akin to the highest. And that is indeed a very grave problem for every human being, which cannot be settled by epistemology or anything of this kind.

Now Kant says then, further, on page⁸⁷ B500,⁸⁸ that Epicureanism is more favorable to the understanding of nature because Plato, as Kant sees him (and not entirely wrongly, of course), would be in favor of using teleological principles in explaining natural phenomena; *Phaedo* 96 is a . . . most famous passage. And then this according to Kant is incompatible with natural science. Of course one would have to raise the question: What about psychology, for example?⁸⁹ Can this be done properly in what Kant calls the Epicurean spirit? Does this not require something like Plato? We do not have to go into that. Now let us read the next paragraph, on page [B]500.⁹⁰

Mr. Reinken:

as regards the third factor which has to be considered in a preliminary choice between the two conflicting parties, it is extremely surprising that empiricism

^{xxxii} Letter LVI, Spinoza to Hugo Boxel, October 1674, in Baruch Spinoza, *The Correspondence of Spinoza*, ed. A. Wolf (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1966), 290.

should be so universally unpopular. The common understanding, it might be supposed, would eagerly adopt a program which promises to satisfy it through exclusively empirical knowledge and the rational connections there revealed—
xxxiii

LS: Now go to page [B]502, now . . .

Mr. Reinken:

Thus *empiricism* is entirely devoid of the popularity of transcendently idealizing reason; and however prejudicial such empiricism may be to the highest practical principles, there is no need to fear that it will ever pass the limits of the Schools, and acquire any considerable influence in the general life or any real favor among the multitude.^{xxxiv}

LS: Now⁹¹ that is a remarkable assertion. For Kant, the scientific spirit will never become popular, and therefore also its implications: the multitude will always be attracted by morality and religion and never by science and its implications. If there was⁹² ever a prophesy which has been refuted by experience it is this one.

There seems to be an apparently conflicting statement in the preface to the second edition, on page 34 of the second edition.

Mr. Reinken: Roman 34?

LS: Roman 34,⁹³ toward the end of the page. “Through⁹⁴ critique alone—”⁹⁵

Mr. Reinken: Critique^{xxxv} “alone can sever the root of *materialism, fatalism, atheism, free-thinking, fanaticism, and superstition*, which can be injurious universally; as—”^{xxxvi}

LS: And so on.⁹⁶ That would seem to mean that materialism and atheism can become injurious universally, i.e., they can become popular. But I think that this relative clause refers only to enthusiasm and superstition, and not to the preceding points, otherwise Kant would really contradict himself.

So we have to leave it at that, ya?⁹⁷ And since we are⁹⁸ at the introduction to the preface to the second edition, page 33, Roman, ya? When he says, now let me see, the schools: “Thus this possession remains undisturbed, and it gains even in respect. That the Schools are now taught⁹⁹ not to presume to possess any higher and more extended insight—”^{xxxvii}

Mr. Reinken: Ah!

^{xxxiii} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B500.

^{xxxiv} Ibid., B502.

^{xxxv} In original: “criticism”

^{xxxvi} Ibid., Bxxxiv.

^{xxxvii} Ibid., Bxxxiii.

insight in a matter of universal human concern than that which is equally within the reach of the great mass of men (ever to be held by us in the highest esteem)—
xxxviii

LS: Ya,¹⁰⁰ “mass of men” is¹⁰¹ “the multitude.” Why not be literal? So “the multitude which for us is most highly to be esteemed”: *Für uns achtungswürdigste*. Now that is a statement which occurs rarely if at all in philosophers prior to Kant. And that is of course the Rousseauan heritage, that the multitude and the people are most respectable to us,¹⁰² and therefore the popularity concern is very important to Kant. But the people at large are protected sufficiently by the fact that the moral reason—and the implications of moral reason, belief in God and the immortality of the soul—are as accessible to the simplest man than to the most subtle philosophers. Therefore, that they do not know the causes of comets, or to say nothing of more subtle questions—that is uninteresting because¹⁰³ the dignity of man does not consist in that, as Kant has said with the greatest possible force at the beginning of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, which we will read soon.

Good. Now the fundamental defect of both empiricism and dogmatism is this: both take the world as a thing in itself,¹⁰⁴ [which Kant makes especially clear regarding these last two antinomies, on page B535].¹⁰⁵ Both sides take the world as a thing in itself, whereas we can know the world only as a phenomenon; and therefore that is a resolution of the conflict, especially in the case of the last two. For example, the third: universal validity of the laws of nature, no freedom;¹⁰⁶ and on the other hand there is freedom. The first is true of the phenomenal world. There cannot be any interruption of the system of natural laws. But as far as the thing in itself is concerned, there may very well be such causality by freedom. And now we will have to speak of it when we discuss the question regarding freedom. That will be taken¹⁰⁷ [up by] Mr. Decker.

Mr. Decker: Mm-hmm.

LS: Are you wrong? Yes. You will read your paper next time.

Mr. Decker: Mm-hmm.

LS: Good. And then we will hear more about that, how Kant understands this distinction between¹⁰⁸ the phenomenal world and the noumenal world—between the phenomenal world and the true world, we could say—and why this is decisive for historicism. And we¹⁰⁹ should then discuss (this is in a way the greatest difficulty in Kant’s teaching) the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal world, and how this coexistence of the two is possible and imaginable. Now I think I’ll leave it now at that, and let us see whether there are any questions regarding the subject of the day or of last time’s. Mr. Friedler [sic]?

Mr. Findley: Isn’t it a bit strange that there be a section entitled “The Interest of Pure Reason”?

xxxviii Ibid.

LS: Hm?

Mr. Findley: In the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

LS: I believe I explained that: Kant as a critic, a judge, *krinōn*, must be impartial. That goes without saying.¹¹⁰ But he cannot be—no one of us can be impartial if he is not aware of his biases. That is today one of the elementary things in social science. It was always known among thinking people, but today it probably has a fancy name [laughter]. And therefore Kant says: Let us make us clear¹¹¹ what we would wish, in order to protect ourselves against our wishes. That's a perfectly sensible thing. And¹¹² by making this remark, Kant throws light on man and human reason; that doesn't do any harm, although it is only a provisional light because the question of which Mr. Bruehl spoke, namely, "What is the basis of morality?" must be answered by Kant. But provisionally we can say that we¹¹³ cannot help making a distinction between decency and indecency in ourselves and others, and we cannot imagine human life without that. This is an important consideration—whether it is the ultimate, the decisive consideration, that may be a question. But we cannot always think and argue on the ultimate level. We must not *brûler les étapes*. What is that in English? *Brûler les étapes*. We must not burn—

Mr. Reinken: Burn our bridges?

LS: Ya, no, the—

Student: Well [laughs]—

LS: How would you translate it? I mean, "rush through." Rush through; we have to make our steps on the way. Ya, now, any other points?

Mr. Findley: But isn't it strange that he calls this "pure reason" rather than perhaps "impure reason" or "practical reason"?

LS: He says here "Of the interest of *reason* in this conflict." Okay, he doesn't say "of the conflict of *pure* reason."

Mr. Findley: So it is a practical consideration in this—?

LS: Practical reason is also pure according to Kant. But still, your objection is not valid. This antinomy of pure reason,¹¹⁴ meaning reason and not merely, say, our desires or our prejudices: Kant means that looking at this conflict, it is reasonable¹¹⁵ to be in favor of empiricism with a view to the possibilities or the progress of natural science, and it is reasonable to take the side of dogmatism from the point of view of morality (and religion).^{xxxix}

Kant doesn't claim to solve the problem of antinomies here. It is a provisional discussion which is meant to render possible an impartial examination by making clear and explicit

^{xxxix} Strauss says: "in paren, and religion, close paren."

our partialities, and we see that our partiality here is split. What our scientific conscience demands is not in agreement with what our moral conscience demands. And both kinds of conscience, if I may say so, must be satisfied. And that Kant¹¹⁶ tries to do in his whole work. Yes?

Student: Yeah, under “Dogmatism of Pure Reason,” do you think that there is an implied criticism of Hume also? Because it seems to me that somehow he’s not there.

LS: No, Hume would be either a dogmatic empiricist or a skeptic.

Same Student: I mean, what I meant to say: dogmatism of empiricism.

LS: Ya sure, or is a skeptic. That is something else. But this is also not a feasible position according to Kant. Yes, Hume surely would not be a dogmatist of pure reason.

Same Student: No, I meant empiricism like—

LS: Ya, ya. Sure.

Same Student: But I meant in the sense that in a way you can’t really accuse Hume of being dogmatic only toward what’s outside, because¹¹⁷ he’s cutting away even empiricism itself. That’s, he’s not—

LS: In a way, ya, sure.¹¹⁸ Therefore Kant admired him so much.

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: That he was impartial even to science. But whether Hume was fully aware of what he was doing¹¹⁹ through his critique of causality, that is a question. Yes? Mr. . . . ?

Student: At [B]494, Kant says that the antithesis robs us of all these supports for morals and religion, “or at least appears to do so.”¹²⁰ Does that last qualifying phrase at least appear to . . . point to the possibility¹²¹ of an alliance between—

LS: No, I think—

Same Student: empiricism and morality?

LS: No—well, could it not mean simply this, that¹²² the antithesis deprives us of these supports, or at least *seems* to deprive us of them? Kant, as it were, remembering the provisional character of this statement, tries to be what he says. At first glance, the assertion that there is no freedom and that there is no origin of the world and no originator of the world has this effect on morality. Kant doesn’t wish here to deepen the issue; he merely says what seems to be the case. I take this to be a self-correction, a minor self-correction in order not to say too much,¹²³ because in fact, Kant asserts, he speaks here only of appearances.

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- ¹ Deleted "the...."
- ² Deleted "he...."
- ³ Deleted "the...."
- ⁴ Deleted "is...."
- ⁵ Deleted "why...."
- ⁶ Deleted "inacceptable."
- ⁷ Deleted "of theoretical...."
- ⁸ Deleted "he...."
- ⁹ Deleted "so."
- ¹⁰ Deleted "we...."
- ¹¹ Deleted "the state of nature is understood...I'm sorry, the."
- ¹² Deleted "the self-preservation."
- ¹³ Deleted "whereas the other living beings are...."
- ¹⁴ Deleted "and."
- ¹⁵ Deleted "LS: No, no, no. Finding, in...in ...oh I see. Yes, all right."
- ¹⁶ Deleted "you...."
- ¹⁷ Deleted "on the natural right...."
- ¹⁸ Deleted "no one."
- ¹⁹ Deleted "In...."
- ²⁰ Deleted "Now...."
- ²¹ Deleted "reaches then quite extraordinary...."
- ²² Deleted "in Book...."
- ²³ Deleted "Rousseau had said the same...."
- ²⁴ Deleted "There cannot...."
- ²⁵ Deleted "So there is then in Rousseau."
- ²⁶ Deleted "that may...."
- ²⁷ Deleted "You know, this...."
- ²⁸ Deleted "That he...."
- ²⁹ Deleted "in a civil...."
- ³⁰ Deleted "it...it...."
- ³¹ Deleted "The radical ...there is...we...."
- ³² Deleted "in the state...."
- ³³ Deleted "how, then, are we going...."
- ³⁴ Deleted "where."
- ³⁵ Deleted "my...."
- ³⁶ Deleted "Our...we...we think...."
- ³⁷ Deleted "has...."
- ³⁸ Deleted "It would...."
- ³⁹ Deleted "If you...we can use this together."
- ⁴⁰ Deleted "The larger...."
- ⁴¹ Deleted "'Transcendental Aesthetic' and 'Transcendental Analytic.' And the 'Transcendental Analytic' is...no, I'm sorry; I made a big mistake, I'm very sorry."
- ⁴² Deleted "are...."
- ⁴³ Deleted "be...."
- ⁴⁴ Deleted "is...."
- ⁴⁵ Deleted "page...well."
- ⁴⁶ Deleted "36...one second."
- ⁴⁷ Deleted "has...."
- ⁴⁸ Deleted "in Kant, there is for...but...for...."
- ⁴⁹ Deleted "is...."
- ⁵⁰ Deleted "That is a superb...and...now...Here, in this...."
- ⁵¹ Deleted "full...the meanings...so there."
- ⁵² Deleted "And, as...."
- ⁵³ Deleted "Now, according...."
- ⁵⁴ Deleted "not to do...."

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- 55 Deleted "which are...."
- 56 Deleted "And they...we could...well we cannot...."
- 57 Deleted "In."
- 58 Deleted "And that...."
- 59 Changed from "The first is on page 454, in...in B...in B."
- 60 Deleted "**Student:** Text numbers? **LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** Could you give the text numbers of the pages? **Reinken:** B462 and B463. **LS:** Now the."
- 61 Deleted "in the...."
- 62 Deleted "Page 490? **Reinken:** Got it."
- 63 Changed from "No no. In...singular [inaudible word]."
- 64 Deleted "this is conflict."
- 65 Deleted "What Kant means in this...."
- 66 Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Mr. Bruell:** 14 years?"
- 67 Deleted "Kant wrote the...."
- 68 Deleted "They...these two parties...."
- 69 Deleted "And Kant...this is all...."
- 70 Deleted "As natural scientists...."
- 71 Deleted "free...." Moved "men."
- 72 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'The contrast between—' oh, 'But when empiricism itself, as frequently—' **LS:** No no. 'This is the, this is the contrast of ...of Epicureanism—' **Reinken:** 'between....'"
- 73 Deleted "not."
- 74 Deleted "to be."
- 75 Deleted "that he...."
- 76 Deleted "of his...."
- 77 Deleted "who had been regarded...."
- 78 Deleted "we are very...."
- 79 Changed from "But we can perhaps...one can say, Kant idealizes Epicurus, makes something...he idealizes, in Kant's sense!"
- 80 Deleted "We would...."
- 81 Deleted "That...."
- 82 Deleted "and."
- 83 Deleted "very well...."
- 84 Deleted "And...."
- 85 Deleted "Kant makes the...."
- 86 Deleted "the...."
- 87 Deleted "500...."
- 88 Deleted "that the virtues of Platonism on the one hand and of Epicureanism on the other...."
- 89 Deleted "where...."
- 90 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'What by—' **LS:** The third."
- 91 Deleted "is this...."
- 92 Deleted "a...."
- 93 Deleted "**Reinken:** The—"
- 94 Deleted "this alone...through."
- 95 Deleted "**Reinken:** Yes. **LS:** Yeah?"
- 96 Deleted "Which can be...."
- 97 Deleted "On the...."
- 98 Deleted "at that...."
- 99 Deleted "to...."
- 100 Deleted "let, this...."
- 101 Deleted "a...."
- 102 Deleted "That is...and that...."
- 103 Deleted "that...."
- 104 Deleted "Or, let me see, I believe that...yeah, that is a bit later, that was not the way, that came later. And I think...well, I can mention it."

¹⁰⁵ Changed from “On page 4...535[B], which Kant makes especially clear regarding these last two antinomies.”

¹⁰⁶ Changed from “For example...then...the third, what is that? universal validity of the laws of nature, no freedom.”

¹⁰⁷ Changed from “let me see, the [inaudible word] is quite [inaudible word].”

¹⁰⁸ Deleted “the phenomenal world and the real...”

¹⁰⁹ Deleted “will also...”

¹¹⁰ Deleted “And...”

¹¹¹ Deleted “where we...”

¹¹² Deleted “at this...by...”

¹¹³ Deleted “all know...”

¹¹⁴ Deleted “but reason...and.”

¹¹⁵ Deleted “to say...”

¹¹⁶ Deleted “is...”

¹¹⁷ Deleted “he’s sort of...”

¹¹⁸ Deleted “That...”

¹¹⁹ Deleted “in...”

¹²⁰ Deleted “Does this last qualifying— **LS:** Where is that, page B494? **Same Student:** 494B, yes.”

¹²¹ Deleted “of alliance...”

¹²² Deleted “Kant makes...”

¹²³ Deleted “But the...”

Session 3: April 11, 1967

Leo Strauss: There is a great question regarding terminology.ⁱ Now, to take up “pathological” first. “Pathological” means “due to *pathē*,”¹ to our being acted upon, in contradistinction to our activity. That is all it means here. So he does not mean “morbid” or anything of this kind.

And now, more difficult: “anthropology” as used by Kant means empirical study of man and not what it means now, the study of primitive, or however they are called, nations.² It was sociology and all these—

Mr. Decker: Yeah, the whole political sciences.

LS: Which would be “anthropology” in Kant’s sense. More serious is the use of the term “intelligible,” because the intelligible character of which Kant speaks here frequently is precisely *not* intelligible in the ordinary sense of the term. So we would have to use a somewhat different term. The simplest would be to substitute in each case for “intelligible,” when occurring in this meaning, “noumenal”—which is only the Greek for intelligible, but it is not used in ordinary parlance and therefore the difficulty is semantically avoided. The phenomenal thing—say, the phenomenal character,³ opposed to the noumenal character. The phenomenal character is known, and is knowable. We say: this is a crook, this is a nice man, this is a weaker, and so on and so on. The intelligible character, [the noumenal character] cannot be known.⁴

But it did not become quite clear from your paper how Kant in general solves this difficulty: that there is an unbreakable causal nexus so that every event in the world, including any human action, is fully determined by precedent causes, and yet there is freedom,⁵ or there *can* be freedom. How does he reconcile that?

Mr. Decker: The series of causes, which are unbroken—

LS: Ya, unbreakable.

Mr. Decker: occur in the field of appearances, and hence in time. Now⁶ every—

LS: Ya, but that is a crucial point. That they occur in time is obvious.

Mr. Decker: Yes—

LS: When we speak of *preceding*, we mean temporally preceding.⁷ But the key point is—

Mr. Decker: The freedom—

LS:⁸ You speak now of *appearances*. With what right can we speak of them?

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Student: Every human action⁹ that is not pathological has both a phenomenal, or an aspect in the field of appearances, but also a noumenal [sic] aspect.

LS: No-umenal.ⁱⁱ Now, why don't we try to make a picture [LS writes on the blackboard]? Here, let this be the human action which we observe. This holding up of a bank or whatever it may be [laughter], ya? Now this is determined by *n* causes, ya?

Mr. Decker: Yes.

LS: And when they come together,¹⁰ then *necessarily* the hold-up takes place.

Mr. Decker: Yes.

LS:¹¹ Good. And this is fully understood, explained, and—

Mr. Decker: And predetermined.

LS: And predetermined. This is one side. And then we say: Well, it is as much determined as an eclipse of the sun, or rain, or whatever it may be. And yet, if this were the whole story, Kant says, if this was—

Mr. Decker: If this were the whole story, then man would just be like a rock or whatever.

LS: Man could not be held responsible.¹²

Mr. Decker: Right,¹³ morality would lose its significance.

LS: No responsibility in *any* sense.

Mr. Decker: On the other side, there is the noumenal character, and this is the thing in itself.¹⁴ It has nothing to do with time.

LS: Now first of all, what is [the]¹⁵ character of this particular nature? What do—

Mr. Decker:¹⁶ That's the intelligible character.

LS: No, no.

Mr. Decker: It's the other side—

LS: We have a hold-up here.

Mr. Decker: OK. [Laughter].

ⁱⁱ Strauss corrects the student's pronunciation.

LS: The hold-up is fully explained.

Mr. Decker: Fine. [Laughter]

LS: ¹⁷ [But] there is no essential difference between the hold-up and the sacrifice of one's life for other human beings.

Mr. Decker: Right.

LS: One is as necessarily determined as the other; both are natural events. And yet in the one case we are inclined to say, in the case of the good deed, it was a good deed or noble deed; and in this case [LS taps on the board] we would say it was an evil deed or a base deed.¹⁸ What do we imply by making this distinction, for which there is no reason whatever on the level of causality?

Mr. Decker: We imply what the man ought to have done.

LS: Yes. So in other words,¹⁹ we assume now that the action of the hold-up man is determined not by the broken home and similar things, but is determined by an evil choice,²⁰ and he could as well have made the right choice. Is that it?

Mr. Decker: Yes.

LS: He *ought* to have done.

Mr. Decker: Yes, he ought to have made the right choice.

LS:²¹ Good. And therefore the determination which leads to this action does not come from the broken home, etc., but from that evil choice, and beyond which we cannot go.

Mr. Decker: Yes.

LS: Does not make *sense* to go . . . So in other words, we have here another kind of causality, actions determined; but a causality²² through freedom, as Kant says. And this goes this way, ya? [LS writes on the blackboard] Here.

Mr. Decker: Okay.

LS: And this is something which cannot be traced to any other cause, because otherwise we would get here, we—

Mr. Decker: The same weakness?

LS: would again be irrational. Is it clear?

Mr. Decker: Yes.

LS: And this action has no beginning, Kant says. This is non-temporal, non-temporal and yet action. Good. And now these two views are incompatible, obviously. I mean, either the broken home and so on and the other things, are [a] sufficient explanation, [and] then we don't need that [LS taps on the board throughout the remainder of the sentence]; or if *this* is a sufficient explanation, we don't need *that*. And they contradict each other. How does Kant get rid of the contradiction? You said it, but I want²³ you to repeat it.

Mr. Decker:²⁴ The cause on this side, the broken home and everything—

LS: Ya.

Mr. Decker: We can learn from observing. But²⁵ Kant says the *causality* of that cause or why it acts; for that we have to look to the noumenal character. Over here.

LS: No,²⁶ I'm sorry. I actually believe I had stated it somewhat more clearly.²⁷ The causal explanation is based on a radical, or rather say, systematic disregard of the moral character of the action, ya?

Mr. Decker: Yeah . . .

LS: I mean, this has the same—

Mr. Decker: That we can observe.

LS: Good. And²⁸ whereas this one—the moral explanation, by the evil choice—is sufficient because there are people who come from non-broken homes and also make hold-ups. And there are men who have a good nature and not a bad nature, and also commit hold-ups, etc., etc. So²⁹ these explanations are all not necessary because of the moral motivation, the moral explanation. Well, is it clear: How does Kant make these two incompatible explanations compatible? That is the question.

Mr. Decker: One, the broken home, etc., explanation is subject to the categories. And—

LS: Ya, but let us go step by step. Let us first use the simple terms for the not so simple terms. This [LS points to board throughout the sentence] is phenomenal—

Mr. Decker: Phenomenal.

LS: and this is noumenal—noumenal, or concerned with the thing in itself. So the basis of Kant's reconciliation is the distinction between phenomena on the one hand, and things in themselves or noumena on the other. On what is this distinction based?

Mr. Decker: What we can experience.

LS: Well, we cannot experience noumena.

Mr. Decker: No. No. Oh well, it's . . .

LS: Nor do we experience the phenomena as phenomena. I mean, this is already an interpretation. We experience actions, events, beings of all kinds; but that they are phenomenal, that requires an act of reflection. Which is not implied in—

Mr. Decker: No, it's based on reason.

LS: How do we arrive at that? Well, that is the work of the “Transcendental Analytics” and “Transcendental Aesthetics”: to show that all our understanding is based on specific premises,³⁰ and especially the temporality and spatiality which are essential, not to all understanding, but only to human understanding. Ya? And this [LS points to board throughout next two sentences] is all spatial-temporal; and here the spatial-temporal does not . . . Now therefore, Kant says, all objects of experience are, as you say, appearances—that is of course a translation of the German word *Erscheinung*.³¹ Let us leave it at that. Appearances. But now—so we can prove that by an immanent analysis of our understanding. And then Kant goes on to say as follows: no appearances without a cause of the appearances, but this cause of the appearances as appearances can no longer be an appearance. Ya? But it must be something existing, being by itself, and that is simply called the thing in itself, or noumenal . . . Good. Now is this satisfactory?

Mr. Decker: I can't make any use of it. I have the whole Kantian concept.

LS: Yes. Now³² perhaps let us consider a few points. Now let us first take one rather late passage here and then have a general discussion, then we'll turn to the earlier part. Now what I have in mind is this:³³ in B578, there³⁴ Kant speaks of our ordinary observation.³⁵ “As regards the character,” the third line after that, about.

Mr. Reinken: “For it may be that only”?

LS: “As regards this empirical characters, there is hence no limit—”

Mr. Reinken: So, oh! Yes. “So far, then, as regards this empirical character there is no—”ⁱⁱⁱ

LS:³⁶ This man is a nice man with a strong will [LS writes on the blackboard], and this is a nice man with a weak will, or *n* subdivisions which you might make. Yes? “There is no freedom.”

Mr. Reinken: “freedom; and yet it is only in the light of this character that man can be studied—if, that is to say, we are simply *observing*—”^{iv}

LS: “Observing” is printed in very fat letters in the original. Observing, yes?

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B578.

^{iv} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

and in the manner of anthropology seeking to institute a physiological investigation into the motive causes of his actions.^v

LS: “Physiological” is here used in the old Greek sense of the word. It means a natural explanation;³⁷ a scientific explanation, we would say today. Ya?³⁸ Good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

But when we consider these actions in their relation to reason—I do not mean speculative reason, by which we endeavor *to explain* their coming into being, but reason in so far as it is itself the cause *producing* them—^{vi}

LS: “Producing” is also underlined. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

if, that is to say, we compare them with^{vii} reason in its *practical* bearing, we find a rule and order altogether different from the order of nature. For it may be that all that *has happened* in the course of nature, and in accordance with its empirical grounds must inevitably have happened, *ought not to have happened*. Sometimes, however, we find, or at least believe that we find, that the ideas of reason have in actual fact proved their causality in respect of the actions of men, as appearances; and that these actions have taken place, not because they were determined by empirical causes, but because they were determined by grounds of reason.^{viii}

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. Kant here makes a distinction which does not necessarily presuppose this difficult distinction between phenomena and noumena. And that is a distinction between observing, or beholding, or explaining, and acting. We can look at actions completed: our own or others'. *Acta*, in Latin. And then we must explain [them]³⁹, according to Kant, as necessarily caused by precedent causes. But if we look at an anticipated action, especially of course of ourselves, at an *agendum*, at something to *be* done—there the causal explanation is of the slightest help, as you know. And this is, in present-day lingo, there is no possibility of . . . ya? So the causal sciences cannot help us out in any important way. And there we have to look in an entirely different way; we have to regard ourselves as responsible.

Now a great practical importance,⁴⁰ on which Kant does not lay stress as far as I remember but which was drawn later on by men influenced by Kant, is this: for example,⁴¹ there are quite a few decent people, moral people, who would hold themselves responsible for their actions, wouldn't wish to have it taken away by psychoanalysis or

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} In original: “[the standards of]”

^{viii} Ibid.

what have you, and yet when judging of *others* would say we must consider the broken home and the other things—because, you know? So in other words,⁴² we must do that because otherwise we will be unjust. [So there is a duality of ways of looking at things, is intelligible and is used, one can say, very frequently.]⁴³ And Kant doubtless prepares this way, this dualism of looking at things as *acta* and hence as demanding causal explanation, and as *agenda*, as things to *be* done which cannot be understood in causal terms.⁴⁴

But let us try to understand, to discuss, the distinction between phenomena and noumena a little bit more fully without first going into Kant's argument. Now the question is this. The difficulties regarding the unknowable thing in itself have been stated most forcefully by Hegel.⁴⁵ The main point can be said to be this: How can you say *anything* about the thing in itself without *knowing* it to some extent? That can be said to be the core of Hegel's criticism of Kant.⁴⁶ There are very few people, even people who on the whole follow Kant, who accept this distinction.⁴⁷ But the question is: Can the unknowable thing in itself be avoided? Now let us assume that the knowable in the highest and fullest sense is the scientifically knowable, or that which can be validated or invalidated by science—a very common view today. But not everything can be validated or invalidated by science. For example, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, all value judgments. To take the formula of Auguste Comte: science can discover the "hows" (the how, for example of planetary motion), but not the "why."^{ix48}

There is then a sphere of genuine problems which transcend science; we can even say the most important problems transcend science. For what are any scientific problems compared with these questions which I mentioned?⁴⁹ That means one must recognize an unknowable thing in itself. And I believe that this kind of men, the so-called positivists, have no weapon against the distinction. For what they have tried to do in my lifetime and the lifetime of some of you, was that they said, "statements not susceptible of scientific validation or invalidation are *meaningless*"—meaning the thesis, the question, God is—or God is not, for that matter—is a *meaningless* assertion. Or "the soul is immortal" or "the soul is mortal" [are meaningless assertions].⁵⁰ And this is of course sheer nonsense. For everyone who understands the bearing of these assertions, however unfounded they may be, they cannot possibly be regarded as meaningless. This was a trick in concealing a dogmatic assertion, namely, that what is beyond the powers of science doesn't exist. And this of course cannot be maintained in any way.

Now⁵¹ let us consider a more important criticism of Kant, stated in a way which seems to be very, very light by Nietzsche in the *Twilight of the Idols*. Mr. Reinken.

^{ix} See, e.g., Comte's statement in the first chapter of *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1842): "the first characteristic of the positive philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural laws. Our business is—seeing how vain is any research into what are called *causes*, whether first or final—to pursue an accurate discovery of these laws, with a view to reducing them to the smallest possible number. By speculating upon causes, we could solve no difficulty about origin and purpose." In *The Essential Writings: Auguste Comte and Positivism*, ed. Gertrude Lenzer (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 75.

Mr. Reinken:

How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable. The History of an Error. 1. The true world—attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, *he is it*. (The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, and persuasive. A circumlocution for the sentence, “I, Plato, *am* the truth.”) 2.^x

LS: So this, in other words, this was the first stage of the “true world.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

The true world—unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”).

(Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible—*it becomes female*, it becomes Christian.)

3. The true world—unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative.

(At bottom, the old sun, but seen through mist and skepticism. The idea has become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian.)^{xi} [Laughter]

LS: Königsberg was, as you know, the birthplace of Kant. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

4. The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?

(Gray morning. The first yawn of reason. The cock crow of positivism.)

5. The “true” world—an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating— an idea which has become useless and superfluous—*consequently*, a refuted idea: let us abolish it!

(Bright day; breakfast; return of *bon sens* and cheerfulness; Plato’s embarrassed blush; pandemonium of all free spirits.)^{xii}

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

^x Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 485.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Ibid., 485-486.

6. The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.*

(Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity. *INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.*)^{xiii}

LS: Yes, now what does Nietzsche say? [Laughter] There was—I mean, what is the key point here, as far as the question is concerned? That we cannot possibly speak, as most people in Nietzsche's time and Nietzsche himself frequently spoke, of the *phenomenal* world unless we presuppose the true world. But if there is no true world, we can no longer speak of the phenomenal world. There is only *the* world. That's the point. And that according to Nietzsche is the end of this way leading from Plato, and via Kant, to him.

And incidentally, the distinction between the true world and the phenomenal is of course implied in modern science. The whole distinction between primary and secondary qualities, to use Locke's term—or as Eddington^{xiv} called it in a well-known description, the true table, the scientific table, and the table we know from our youth.^{xv52} The true table [LS raps on the table] is the scientific table, of course. And⁵³ that means⁵⁴ that it has none of the qualities for which it is of any use to us or by which it is known to us.

So Nietzsche's view can be stated as follows, against Kant: Kant,⁵⁵ as has often been said, takes physics, Newtonian physics, for granted. For Nietzsche, science, Newtonian or post-Newtonian,⁵⁶ is only one form among many of world interpretations. Everything which has any meaning has this meaning by virtue of men's creative acts. And these creative acts are not fundamentally the same—of the pure reason, as in Kant—but indefinitely variable, historical. There is no beyond; we can never go beyond this sphere of human interpretation. There is no beyond, no without. And therefore it doesn't make sense to speak of a thing in itself. The utmost one could find according to Nietzsche, beyond or prior to the interpretations, would be a chaos,⁵⁷ a meaningless chaos which functions as matter, as *hulē*, for the creative acts of men. But even here, its being understood as chaos is already an interpretation. So we can never go beyond this world of human interpretation, the anthropomorphic world, and the allegedly unanthropomorphic interpretation of the world supplied by modern physics is only a disguised anthropomorphism.

Now let us try to understand Kant's point from a slightly different point of view. Kant says all *knowledge* (as distinguished from mere thinking, because we can think things which we do not know), all knowledge which we have is *human, only human*.⁵⁸ This "only" human presupposes some awareness of the character of a possible divine knowledge. On the basis of what we know, however, one could say [that] we are entitled

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington (1882-1944), British astrophysicist and member of the Royal Society.

^{xv} See the Introduction to Eddington's 1927 Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, printed in *The Nature of the Physical World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974).

to speak of human knowledge not merely as “only” human. That is⁵⁹ something which Kant borrows from earlier thought, and of which it is a question whether it is sufficiently established by his own thought.

Now Kant’s discussion of freedom in the *Critique of Pure Reason* presupposes natural science as *the* perfection of the human understanding. In other words, when some shepherd in some out-of-the-way mountain range feeds his sheep, then he does in principle the same what Newton did: he only is very limited and does not apply this way of approach, which he follows by giving this particular food to the sheep and not others. He doesn’t apply it to, let’s say, to comets or other celestial,⁶⁰ far-fetched objects.

So natural science is *the* perfection of the ordinary understanding. But this has become a question since the time of Kant: Is modern natural science the perfection of the natural understanding, or is it not rather a specific modification of it? In the moment this proves to be a specific modification and not the perfection, the question becomes⁶¹ more necessary than ever before: Why science?—the question which was raised by Nietzsche with greater emphasis than by anybody else. Now this question cannot be answered scientifically; it cannot be answered rationally, even, for the very simple reason because if it could, then we would have a rational value judgment to the effect that science is good. And as you know this is strictly forbidden:⁶² [there is] no such thing. So science, then, is [freely chosen, and not merely as the profession of some individuals but as an approach, an outlook].⁶³ There are no necessary reasons, and that is a very remarkable thing—and, in a way, a vindication of Kant, because that thesis shows of them that when we analyze the human understanding, or science, the fundamental fact at which we eventually arrive is not time and space and the categories, and other things mentioned in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but the abyss of freedom. Science itself is secondary, derivative, compared with the fundamental choice. The primary thing is freedom. And⁶⁴ now we understand better, perhaps, what Kant means when he says [that] the scientific world is the phenomenal world. Freedom is noumenal; it belongs to the deepest stratum.

So from today, observations or reflections like those I sketched show that however difficult or even unintelligible Kant’s doctrine of the thing in itself (and in particular of the relation of the noumenal to the empirical character of man) may be, it contains some things which are still carrying great conviction for many of our contemporaries.

So now let us turn to a discussion.⁶⁵ Now Kant⁶⁶ begins with a distinction between two kinds of causality: causality according to nature and a causality from freedom. The causality according to nature: that means that the cause is always the effect of a preceding cause; and causality from freedom means the faculty to begin a state simply. Let us see where that is. On page⁶⁷ [B561].

Mr. Reinken: “By freedom—”?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

on the other hand, in its cosmological meaning, I understand the power of beginning a state *spontaneously*.^{xvi}

LS: Ya, that's all we need. Spontaneous from—yes, i.e., freedom thus understood is a pure, transcendental idea, Kant says. That means that it wholly transcends all possible experience. Yet why does reason create for itself this idea? That is a bit later in the—^{xvii}68

Mr. Reinken:

But since in this way no absolute totality of conditions determining causal relation can be obtained, reason creates for itself the idea of a spontaneity which can begin to act of itself, without requiring to be determined to action by an antecedent cause in accordance with the law of causality.^{xviii}

LS: In other words, in the causal speculation. We are confronted with an indefinite regress. This is a cause? Ya, but this cause is itself caused^{xix} with that, and therefore it creates the idea of cause which does no longer have a cause. And this is of course, as Kant makes clear, wholly useless for our knowledge, which is empirical knowledge. But now let us read on, a little bit later, page [B]562, beginning. “Freedom in the practical meaning.”

Mr. Reinken:

Freedom in the practical sense is the will's independence of coercion through sensuous impulses. For a will is sensuous, in so far as it is *pathologically affected*, i.e. by sensuous motives; it is *animal* (*arbitrium brutum*), if it can be pathologically *necessitated*. The human will is certainly an *arbitrium sensitivum*—^{xx}

LS: Not will; the literal translation would be “arbitrariness.” . . . ya?

Mr. Reinken:

The human arbitrariness is certainly an *arbitrium sensitivum*, not, however, brute^{xxi}, but free^{xxii}. For sensibility does not necessitate its action. There is in man a power of self-determination, independently of any coercion through sensuous impulses.

Obviously, if all causality in the sensible world were mere nature, every event would be determined by another in time, in accordance with necessary laws. Appearances, in determining the will, would have in the actions of the will their natural effects, and would render the actions

^{xvi} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B561.

^{xvii} Strauss and Mr. Reinken settle on the passage to be read.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Strauss repeatedly taps on the table for emphasis.

^{xx} Ibid., B562.

^{xxi} In original: “*brutum*”

^{xxii} In original: “*liberum*”

necessary. The denial of transcendental freedom must, therefore, involve the elimination of all practical freedom. For practical freedom presupposes that although something has not happened, it *ought* to have happened, and that its cause, in the field of appearance^{xxiii}, is not, therefore, so determining that it excludes a causality of our will—a causality which, independently of those natural causes, and even contrary to their force and influence, can produce something that is determined in the time-order in accordance with empirical laws, and which can therefore begin a series of events *entirely of itself*.^{xxiv}

LS: So in other words, this transcendental freedom—or as Kant also said formerly, freedom in the cosmological understanding—is a pure or mere idea of reason, i.e., it's necessary for reason to create this idea but it⁶⁹ cannot be used theoretically. But this transcendental idea of freedom is the basis of the practical concept of freedom, and Kant makes clear in the passage we read what freedom in the practical sense is.

The problem, he indicates in the sequel, is not physiological or psychological but transcendental.⁷⁰ Kant could also have said it's not ontological, it is⁷¹ transcendental; which means here [that] it cannot be solved without taking into consideration the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal, as he will make clear in the sequel.

Now we can perhaps read on page [B]564, the first—

Mr. Reinken:

The difficulty which then meets us, in dealing with the question regarding nature and freedom, is whether freedom is possible at all, and if it be possible, whether it can exist along with the universality of the natural law of causality. Is it a truly disjunctive proposition to say that every effect in the world must arise *either* from nature *or* from freedom; or must we not rather say that in one and the same event, in different relations, both can be found?^{xxv}

LS: Yes. So in other words,⁷² it is not a true distinction because⁷³ they refer to different spheres. Every effect in the world stems from nature, belongs to the phenomenal world, and some effects in the world stem from freedom, belong to the noumenal sphere. If temporal, spatial events were things in themselves, there could be no freedom; but, Kant says, having proved that (or believed to have proved it) in the “Transcendental Aesthetics,” space and time are only phenomena.⁷⁴ Temporal-spatial events are phenomena and hence must have causes that are not phenomena: intellectual causes, noumena. Now I repeat that this noumenal causality is trans-temporal. Let us take as one passage,⁷⁵ [on] page [B]569. “According to the intelligible character, it—” or “noumenal,” we should rather say.

Mr. Reinken: Right . . .

^{xxiii} In original: “as found in the field of experience”

^{xxiv} B562.

^{xxv} B564.

In its noumenal character (though we can only have a general concept of that character)—^{xxvi}

LS: I.e., no *knowledge* of it; we can only think it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: It's not intelligible.

this same subject must be considered to be free from all influence of sensibility and from all determination through appearances. Inasmuch as it is *noumenon*, nothing *happens* in it; there can be no change requiring dynamical determination in time, and therefore no causal dependence upon appearances. And consequently, since natural necessity is to be met with only in the sensible world, this active being must in its actions be independent of, and free from all such necessity. No action begins *in* this active being itself; but we may yet quite correctly say that the active being *of itself* begins its effects in the sensible world. In so doing, we should not be asserting that the effects in the sensible world can begin of themselves; they are always predetermined through antecedent empirical conditions, though solely through their empirical character (which is no more than the appearance of the noumenal), and so are only possible as a continuation of the series of natural causes. In this way freedom and nature, in the full sense of these terms, can exist together, without any conflict, in the same actions, according as the actions are referred to their noumenal or to their sensible cause.^{xxvii}

LS: Ya. Well this I'll try to present, but this . . . is key. Now is this not rather difficult to understand, this noumenal thing, *ego*, in which nothing *happens*, which is trans-temporal and yet which is active? Can there be any action which is trans-temporal? It's hard to understand, isn't it? How can we—I mean, sometimes it is helpful to consider the premises, the historical premises, which a thinker makes—and especially in the case of Kant, that is unavoidable. Is there any basis for such a notion, of trans-temporal and yet active, actual, in the tradition antedating Kant? Yes?

Student: In Aristotle.⁷⁶

LS: All right, ya, but the whole biblical, the whole theological tradition . . . God and the blessed, and therefore of course this would not entitle Kant to assert it, but it is hard to understand Kant without taking into consideration this possibility, that he did make such borrowings from the tradition. Mr. Schaefer?

Mr. Schaefer: Doesn't the biblical tradition presuppose that the world was created at a point in time?

LS: [Yes, well, that is also in a non-literal sense a Kantian view].⁷⁷ I mean, in other words, Kant would not assert that we must assume that the world was created, say, 5700

^{xxvi} Ibid., B569.

^{xxvii} Ibid.

[or] so years ago. This he would regard as unfounded.⁷⁸ But if we must assume, as according to Kant we must,⁷⁹ on the basis of morality—i.e., in order to be consistently moral—if we must assume that there must be a God and that this God is then understood as the ultimate cause, and then the world has a cause, and to that extent a beginning.

Mr. Schaefer: But what about—

LS: Or generally speaking, whenever you have this notion of progress and in the sense in which it was very common in the eighteenth century, namely, then there is presupposed a beginning, and a beginning of men on earth, you know? Otherwise you come back to the Aristotelian or Platonic cataclysms, and then there is not the one line of progress, ya?

Mr. Schaefer: How is the notion of a beginning compatible with the idea that a cause—that not only God . . .

LS: Speculatively, we cannot make any use of it. In other words, speculatively Darwin and other such terrible persons are right. But if we would leave it at Darwin and his successors, and if this were the whole truth, then morality would be impossible [LS taps on the table]. Then morality would be a kind of stimulus and response, an affair of some morbid motives, or form of motives.⁸⁰ For Kant it is of crucial importance: no obstacles in the way of causal scientific explanation, anywhere! And yet Kant bracketed off the whole sphere of science. He had to—*aufheben*, what is that?

Mr. Reinken: Deny its—

LS: All right, anyway, all right. *Tollere*, in Latin. *Tollere*, raise up.

Student: [A confusion of student voices, all speaking over one another and Strauss, only some audible, one distinctly says:] *Aufheben*, raise up, lift up, elevate?

LS: Ya, and at the same time destroy.^{xxviii} . . . Raise up and destroy. He had to—

Mr. Reinken: Remove! [Laughter]

LS: Ya, all right, let us say [that] he had to remove science in order to find space for faith; that's Kant's formula, and that, it was—

Mr. Schaefer: But my question is this: that on the basis of Kant's own terms and of the Bible, it would seem that if one presupposes that the world were created by God, then at least in terms of that world, it was created at a point in time. And it seems . . .

LS: Ya, well, that is very hard to say, because the Bible doesn't say anything about the time at the creation. You introduced then into the Bible a question which arose only, we can say, after the *collision* of the Bible with Greek science, which surely doesn't exist in the Old Testament. And secondly, for Kant the Bible is nothing sacrosanct, as we will see

^{xxviii} Inaudible words, followed by laughter.

when we come to his discussion of the first chapters of the Bible in the—how does he call it? the “*Conjectural Beginning of the Human Race*.” Yes.

Student: It seems to me that this argument here is not biblical or Aristotelian because Aristotle’s matter, his substance, is not active. I think this argument is very reminiscent of Leibniz here, because while Kant doesn’t want to say too much about the thing in itself, just to the degree that what he says here, and this sentence here: “No action begins *in* this active being itself; but we may yet quite correctly say that the active being *of itself* begins its effects in the sensible world,”^{xxix} it seems very much like the discussion of a monad, really, in Leibniz’s metaphysics, something which can begin acting on its own, spontaneously, so to speak.

LS: Ya, but that leads then to the very complicated question: What is the relation of the monads to the spatial-temporal world? And there is at least the possibility that the monads—and that is the way in which Kant, I believe, understood Leibniz—that the monads are the noumenal world; hence, trans-temporal and trans-spatial, you know? And the spatial-temporal world is a phenomenon—as Leibniz says, *bene fundatum*, a well-founded phenomenon—but nonetheless a phenomenon. So no, I made the point [that] it is most simple⁸¹ to say that the traditional theology, *natural* theology, not biblical theology as it was taught at the German Protestant universities—especially throughout the eighteenth century and as Kant himself taught it in his classes, because Kant did not teach in his classes his own philosophy, not because he was afraid to teach it but this was a contract; he was, so to speak, he was paid to teach metaphysics^{xxx} according to the textbooks or whatever they used. And⁸² according to this view—which goes back to much older sources but in the first place to scholasticism, ultimately to Augustine—according to this view, there is no difficulty in asserting that there is activity, ya? Actuality, actusity, trans-temporal: God’s actusity. That’s all I meant.

So now let us go a bit further,⁸³ [on] page [B]574. “For if we follow in that which among the phenomena may be the cause, if we follow there the root of—” A bit before [B]574.

Mr. Reinken:

This intelligible ground does not have to be considered⁸⁴ in empirical enquiries—
xxxi

LS: All right.

Mr. Reinken:

and⁸⁵ concerns only thought in the pure understanding; and although the effects of this thought and action of the pure understanding are to be met within the appearances—^{xxxii}

^{xxix} Ibid., B569.

^{xxx} Strauss taps on the table for emphasis.

^{xxxi} Ibid., B573.

^{xxxii} Ibid., B574.

LS: Or the phenomena. That is part of the German, the word *Erscheinung*, which he sometimes translates by “phenomenon”⁸⁶ and sometimes by “appearances.” What shall we do? We have to make up our minds, ya?

Mr. Reinken: Kant doesn’t use “phenomena” as well as *Erscheinung*, or does Kant seem to . . .

LS: “Phenomenon” is only the Latin, or Greek term for *Erscheinung*, ya.

Mr. Reinken: —for *Erscheinung*, yeah.

LS: All right, but if you understand that this is—yes.^{xxxiii}

Mr. Reinken:

these phenomena must none the less be capable of complete causal explanation in terms of other phenomena—^{xxxiv}87

LS: Ya, of *complete* explanation. So in other words, this hold-up man [LS points to the board] is in principle *completely* intelligible by the empirical sciences, ya? Good. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

We have to take their strictly empirical character as the supreme ground of explanation, leaving entirely out of account their noumenal^{xxxv} character (that is, the transcendental cause of their empirical character) as being completely unknown, save in so far as the empirical serves for its sensible sign.^{xxxvi}

LS: So in other words, when I see this, when I observe this hold-up man . . . a vicious liar, then I explain it by this causally, as we have seen. But I can also regard it—this nasty fellow, nasty character, as the sensual side of the *choice* which he has made, namely, of the wicked choice, or a particular kind of wicked choice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Let us apply this to experience. Man is one of the phenomena of the sensible world, and in so far one of the natural causes the causality of which must stand under empirical laws. Like all other things in nature, he must have an empirical character. This character we come to know through he powers and faculties which he reveals in his actions. In lifeless, or merely animal, nature we find no ground for thinking that any faculty is conditioned otherwise than in a merely sensible manner. Man, however, who knows all the rest of nature solely through the senses, knows himself also through mere apperception; and this, indeed, in acts and inner determinations which he cannot regard as impressions of the senses. He is

^{xxxiii} Strauss speaks over the reader, whose words are inaudible as a result.

^{xxxiv} Ibid.

^{xxxv} In original: “intelligible”

^{xxxvi} Ibid.

thus to himself, on the one hand phenomenon, and on the other hand, in respect of certain faculties the action of which cannot be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility, a merely noumenal object. We entitle these faculties understanding and reason. The latter, in particular, we distinguish in a quite peculiar and especial way from all empirically conditioned powers. For it views its objects merely^{xxxvii} in the light of ideas, and in accordance with them determines the understanding, which then proceeds to make an empirical use of its own similarly pure concepts.^{xxxviii}

LS: Now this seems to complicate matters a bit. We observe all kinds of things in the phenomenal world without getting into any troubles except when we come to man. Man does not simply belong to the phenomenal world⁸⁸ because he has understanding and reason. Understanding and reason cannot be *explained* psychologically, physiologically. Simply stated, understanding and reason are the ground of the phenomenal world and can, therefore, [not be]⁸⁹ explained in terms of the phenomenal world. Does this make sense? You can take—well, take another example: try to have a psychology of thinking in which you try to understand acts of thinking *mechanically*; mechanically, say, on the basis of stimulus and response or such other things.⁹⁰ But assuming that a man makes a perfectly sound syllogism, can this be understood in terms of, say, stimulus-response?⁹¹ I mean, if he makes a blunder, makes a mistake, then you can say: Well, he was asleep, or was drunk, or he thought of something else, etc. So *errors* are in need of an explanation,⁹² let us say of a scientific explanation. But correct thinking is not as such in need of psychological explanation, and this is also something which is implied in what Kant says here. ⁹³[Man] does not simply belong to the phenomenal world by the mere fact that he has understanding or reason. Yes?

Mr. Bruell:⁹⁴ Does that mean that understanding and thinking⁹⁵ can themselves be understood without recourse, or without reflection upon the phenomenal world of—?

LS: Ya, cannot. I mean, this was a great controversy, around the last decades of the nineteenth century [and the] first decade of this century, between two schools. I know that the discussion, especially from Germany (I believe that Germany was the main seed, but it surely was affected also the other countries), and there was a way of thinking called psychologism. And psychologism was the attempt to give an account of logic and logical thinking in psychological terms. And psychology was at that time still associationist,^{xxxix} and so on. The most famous document is the first volume of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.⁹⁶ I do not even know whether they are translated into English; I suppose they are, but I do not know how well. Be this as it may. For Kant, this question is not immediately relevant but, as this passage shows, the understanding and the reason are not, cannot be understood in terms of the phenomenal world; and we can give this account, which I believe comes closest to what Kant himself meant to⁹⁷ [say], because

^{xxxvii} In original: "merely exclusively"

^{xxxviii} Ibid., B574-575.

^{xxxix} See for example, Howard Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1921).

they are the ground of the phenomenal world and therefore cannot be explained in terms of the phenomenal world.

Mr. Bruell: But these two schools wouldn't exhaust the possibilities—

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Bruell: These two positions that you outlined wouldn't exhaust the possibilities.

LS: Well,⁹⁸ not entirely. But then of course we would have to bust the case wide open, and say: How (if I may use this Perry Mason expression [laughter]—but, and we would have to see how do these problems appear if we look at them from, say, the Aristotelian or Platonic point of view—which we must do, but I propose that we do that when we come to the primary subject of this course, namely Kant's moral philosophy. Sure.⁹⁹ The Aristotelian psychology is of course of an entirely different character than, say, Hume's, and psychologies stemming from Hume. Ya? That's clear.

Now¹⁰⁰ reason and understanding in the theoretical sense transcend the phenomenal world, but not in the same way as that reason with which we are particularly concerned here. That is said in the sequel. Yes? "That this reason," of which he has spoken.

Mr. Reinken:

That this^{xi} reason has causality, or that we at least represent it to ourselves as having causality, is evident from the *imperatives* which in all matters of conduct we impose as rules upon our active powers. '*Ought*' expresses a kind of necessity and of connection with grounds which is found nowhere else in the whole of nature. The understanding can know in nature only what is, what has been, or what will be. We cannot say that anything in nature *ought to be* other than what in all these time-relations it actually is. When we have the course of nature alone in view, '*ought*' has no meaning whatsoever. It is just as—^{xli}

LS: Hear, hear. You know, that is underlying the famous fact/value distinction today. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition, as I have stated earlier. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

It is just as absurd to ask what ought to happen in the natural world as to ask what properties a circle ought to have. All that we are justified in asking is: what happens in nature? what are the properties of the circle?

This "*ought*" expresses a possible action the ground of which cannot be anything but a mere concept; whereas in the case of a merely natural action the ground must always be a phenomena. The action to which the '*ought*' applies must indeed be possible under natural conditions. These

^{xi} In original: "our"

^{xli} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B575.

conditions, however, do not play any part in determining the will itself, but only determining the effect and its consequence in the^{xlii} phenomenal. No matter how many natural grounds or how many sensuous impulses may impel me to *will*, they can never give rise to the “*ought*,” but only to a willing which, while very far from being necessary, is always conditioned; and the “*ought*” pronounced by reason confronts such willing with a limit and an end—nay, more, forbids or authorizes it. Whether what is willed be an object of mere sensibility (the pleasant) or of pure reason (the good), reason will not give way to any ground which is empirically given. Reason does not here follow the order of things as they present themselves in the phenomenal, but frames for itself with perfect spontaneity an order of its own according to ideas, to which it adapts the empirical conditions, and according to which it declares actions to be necessary, even although they have never taken place, and perhaps never will take place. And at the same time reason also presupposes that it can have causality in regard to all these actions, since otherwise no empirical effects could be expected from its ideas.^{xliii}

LS: Kant says here, anticipating what he will develop in his criticism of moral philosophy, what the “ought” implies, the “ought” which we presuppose in all moral judgments about ourselves or others. And the “ought” implies that this and this *ought* to be done without making any assertion as to whether it has been done or will be done. It only asserts that there is something in man by virtue of which he is aware that he ought to influence the phenomenal world to act within the phenomenal world in a certain way,¹⁰¹ without any implication that he will so act. Let us read a little bit later the note on page [B]579.

Mr. Reinken:

The real morality of actions, their merit or guilt, even that of our own conduct, thus remains entirely hidden from us. Our imputations can refer only to the empirical character. How much of this character is ascribable to the pure effect of freedom, how much to mere nature, that is, to faults of temperament for which there is no responsibility, or to its happy constitution (the deserts of fortune),^{xliv} can never be determined; and upon it therefore no perfectly just judgments can be passed.^{xlv}

LS: So in other words,¹⁰² that is the practical meaning of what Kant means when he says that the intelligible character or the intellectual character, noumenal character, is unknowable. We cannot know, in our own or in any other man’s case, what the true merit or guilt [is]. We cannot judge fairly because this last and irreducible act of freedom is wholly unknowable but must be presupposed.

^{xlii} In original: “(field of)”

^{xliii} Ibid., B575-576.

^{xliv} In original: “*merito fortunae*”

^{xlv} Ibid., B579.

Now you are surprised. And you could say that if a man commits a manifestly dastardly and beastly action, are we not then entitled to say that he¹⁰³ has a wicked motive? That is a difficulty and¹⁰⁴ we will try to face that when we have read more of Kant's moral philosophy.

Mr. Reinken: Surely there's an echo of "judge not" in that footnote. He uses *Richter*.

LS: Hm?

Mr. Reinken: It's true this echo of "Judge not lest ye be judged," so the—

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Reinken: . . . footnote's coming round into an orthodox . . .

LS: Ya, but if you take, however, what Kant says: "Don't judge *yourself*. Don't believe you can judge yourself," that is also implied. Kant doesn't say simply that, by the way: he says we cannot judge with perfect justice.

Now there is another point: this illustration which was already quoted by Mr. Decker.¹⁰⁵ That is on page [B]582. Ya, let us read that. Page [B]582, the new paragraph.¹⁰⁶ "In order that."

Mr. Reinken: The lying fellow.

In order to illustrate this regulative principle of reason by an example of its empirical employment—not, however, to confirm it, for it is useless to endeavor to prove transcendental propositions by examples—let us take a voluntary action, for—^{xlvi}

LS: Ya, "voluntary." You see, that's in German *Willkürlich*, ya? Which is from—

Mr. Reinken: Arbitrary.

LS: Ya, which depends upon the *arbitrium* of man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

A fellow tells a malicious lie spreading a certain confusion in society.^{xlvi} First of all, we endeavor to discover the motives to which it has been due, and then, secondly, in the light of these, we proceed to determine how far the action and its consequences can be imputed to the offender. As regards the first question, we trace the empirical character of the action to its sources, finding—^{xlvi}

^{xlvi} Ibid., B582.

^{xlvi} In original: "for example, a malicious lie by which a certain confusion has been caused in society."

^{xlvi} Ibid.

LS: And so on. Where that's the broken home, by the way. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

We proceed in this enquiry just as we should in ascertaining for a given natural effect the series of its determining causes. But although we believe that the action is thus determined, we none the less blame the agent, not indeed on account of his unhappy disposition, nor on account of the circumstances that have influenced him, nor even on account of his previous way of life; for we presuppose that we can leave out of consideration what his way of life may have been, that we can regard the past series of conditions as not having occurred and the act as being completely unconditioned by any preceding state—^{xlix}

LS: You see now why Kant insists on this absolute beginning, beyond time. In every moment a man, however wicked he has lived before, this source of original purity, as it were, is still in him and in no way impaired by his previous conduct. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:¹⁰⁷

just as if the agent in and by himself began in this action an entirely new series of consequences. Our blame is based on a law of reason whereby we regard reason as a cause that irrespective of all the above-mentioned empirical conditions could have determined, and ought to have determined, the agent to act otherwise. This causality of reason we do not regard as only a co-operating agency, but as complete in itself, even when the sensuous impulses do not favor but are directly opposed to it; the action is ascribed to the agent's noumenal character; in the moment when he utters the lie, the guilt is entirely his. Reason, irrespective of all empirical conditions of the act, is completely free, and the lie is entirely due to its default.¹

LS: Ya, that is a very clear statement about this state of things which I tried to put here on the blackboard [LS taps on the blackboard]. This is a self—both explanations are sufficient, and therefore there is a clear contradiction which can be resolved according to Kant only by ascribing the two explanations to two radically different spheres: the phenomenal on the one hand and the noumenal on the other. Is there anything more that you . . .

Student: Is this . . . the end . . .

LS: Pardon?

Student: Is this an unreconcilable conflict?

^{xlix} Ibid., B582-583.

¹ Ibid., B583.

LS: No, the antinomy exists prior to its resolution.¹⁰⁸ And that is a point which goes through the whole argument [and] destroys theoretical metaphysics, because a theoretical metaphysician¹⁰⁹ must assert that one *or* the other of the two assertions is theoretically true. And Kant says: that which is theoretically true, because it is the only condition of a coherent explanation of phenomena, is valid only for the phenomenal world; and the other, which is morally true, cannot be asserted theoretically. It can be asserted only on the basis of the moral consciousness. That is . . . So . . . Kant reasserts the contradiction, the antinomy. Yes. Well, then next time Mr. Findley will read a paper . . .

¹ Deleted "to what...."

² Deleted "Let me...so there...."

³ Deleted "ya."

⁴ Moved "the noumenal character."

⁵ Deleted "How does Kant reconcile?"

⁶ Deleted "every...."

⁷ Deleted "So, the question is...."

⁸ Deleted "what you...."

⁹ Deleted "or."

¹⁰ Deleted "then...then only...but."

¹¹ Deleted "And there is...."

¹² Changed from "Man would...could not be...be held responsible."

¹³ Deleted "there'd be no...."

¹⁴ Deleted "It is outside...outside of...."

¹⁵ Deleted "a."

¹⁶ Deleted "That's the...."

¹⁷ Deleted "And now...but the hold-up is not...."

¹⁸ Deleted "Where...."

¹⁹ Deleted "man's...."

²⁰ Deleted "an evil choice which he...."

²¹ Deleted "So he...."

²² Deleted "from...."

²³ Deleted "to...."

²⁴ Deleted "The...."

²⁵ Deleted "the...can't...."

²⁶ Deleted "the...."

²⁷ Deleted "We cannot...."

²⁸ Deleted "therefore...."

²⁹ Deleted "no explanation...there is no...."

³⁰ Deleted "which are...."

³¹ Deleted "I do not...."

³² Deleted "but...."

³³ Deleted "On...."

³⁴ Deleted "we have first...."

³⁵ Deleted "In...a little...578."

³⁶ Deleted "They...."

³⁷ Deleted "a natural...."

³⁸ Deleted "That...."

³⁹ Deleted "it."

⁴⁰ Deleted "which...."

⁴¹ Deleted "there are very...."

⁴² Deleted "this kind...."

⁴³ Changed from "So there is a...a duality of...of...of ways of looking at things, is intelligible and is used, to one's...one can say, very frequently."

⁴⁴ Deleted "Now, this is...."

-
- 45 Deleted "Because...."
- 46 Deleted "So it...this...."
- 47 Deleted "but...today."
- 48 Deleted "not the why."
- 49 Deleted "There...."
- 50 Changed from "Or, 'The soul is immortal' or 'The soul is mortal' is a meaningless assertion."
- 51 Deleted "let us consider another...."
- 52 Deleted "That would...."
- 53 Deleted "this is...."
- 54 Deleted "there is...."
- 55 Deleted "takes."
- 56 Deleted "forms...."
- 57 Deleted "which...a chaos of...not...a chaos which...."
- 58 Deleted "Kant understands this in contradistinction...."
- 59 Deleted "a kind...."
- 60 Deleted "and...."
- 61 Deleted "very...very...."
- 62 Deleted "There are no such...."
- 63 Changed from "So science, then, is not merely...and not merely as the profession of some individuals, but as an approach, an outlook, is freely chosen."
- 64 Deleted "this in Kant's...."
- 65 Deleted "of the...."
- 66 Deleted "makes first a distinction...he."
- 67 Deleted "561. B, 460...561."
- 68 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'That everything which happens'? **LS:** 'But all, but since—' **Reinken:** 'Hence the causality—'? **LS:** 'But since, but since in this manner, no absolute totality of the conditions—' **Reinken:** Yeah. I—"
- 69 Deleted "cannot be...is of no use...."
- 70 Deleted "That's to say, we have not here, this...."
- 71 Deleted "not...but...."
- 72 Deleted "we must...it is not a true...."
- 73 Deleted "they belong...."
- 74 Deleted "And hence must...or...."
- 75 Deleted "in...."
- 76 Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** In Aristotle."
- 77 Changed from "Yes, well, that is also a...in a, in a non-...not literal sense, a Kantian view."
- 78 Deleted "But that the...."
- 79 Deleted "that the...."
- 80 Deleted "It would be some of the...that is...you know, that...Kant...."
- 81 Deleted "and without...most simple."
- 82 Deleted "this, we...."
- 83 Deleted "in...."
- 84 Deleted "in the...."
- 85 Text has "it."
- 86 Deleted "and sometimes... 'phenomenon.'"
- 87 For the rest of this lecture, Reinken uses "phenomena" where the text has "appearances."
- 88 Deleted "and we may say...and."
- 89 Changed from "be not."
- 90 Deleted "But you must consider that...."
- 91 Deleted "Must you not at...."
- 92 Deleted "of a...."
- 93 Deleted "Under...man is...."
- 94 Deleted "Would that...."
- 95 Deleted "could be...."
- 96 Deleted "which would...."

⁹⁷ Deleted “saying.”

⁹⁸ Deleted “they....”

⁹⁹ Deleted “then it would be....”

¹⁰⁰ Deleted “this is the...but, what...so...even....”

¹⁰¹ Deleted “without giving him any....”

¹⁰² Deleted “there is no...the intelligible....”

¹⁰³ Deleted “is....”

¹⁰⁴ Deleted “we come....”

¹⁰⁵ Deleted “Where is that? Oh this is...oh.”

¹⁰⁶ Deleted “**Reinken:** Uh, it...the—”

¹⁰⁷ Deleted “Our blame....”

¹⁰⁸ Deleted “But...and...and the resolution also....”

¹⁰⁹ Deleted “must take....”

Session 4: April 13, 1967

Leo Strauss:¹ That was a good paper,ⁱ a very good . . . Now there was only one point² which did not convince me. You said Kant criticizes Pascal's wager. I would rather say he agrees with Pascal, in a not quite Pascalian manner, because when Kant speaks of what is betting—what does Kant say about wagers and betting?

Mr. Findley: It's the touchdown of pragmatic belief.

LS: Right. Does this not make sense? And Kant says—you see, he knew many people, and some people are willing to bet, say, a dollar, let's say so; but when they should bet hundred dollars, they would become hesitant. So the test of the strength of our pragmatic belief is betting. This has nothing to do with Pascal's problem, because³ Kant at least would not say that Pascal's problem concerns pragmatic beliefs; it concerns⁴ moral belief. Now, but as regards his moral belief, what do . . . to us about the alternatives. The moral man believes that there will be another life, and this will strengthen his moral life. But what about the immoral man? And he will simply say: Well, there is no God, no future life, and I will live as I see fit provided I avoid the earthly judges. What does Kant say?

Mr. Findley: He has no certainty that there is no God and no future life.

LS: I see. Now is this not fundamentally what Pascal does?

Mr. Findley: Well, Pascal, though, says that one *must* wager, whereas Kant seems to say that the immoral man . . .

LS: No. Kant says, in a way, the same thing. He doesn't speak of wagers, but⁵ Pascal speaks of Christianity and not belief in God and future life in general. I suppose [that is] a difference, but apart from that is it not the same problem?

Mr. Findley: Well, it's the same problem, but I think Kant believes that he has a better solution to it than that of Pascal.

LS: But⁶ is it not a confirmation, rather, of Pascal's wager-notion: That we cannot be certain and it is more prudent to assume, to reckon with, this possibility of God and punishment after death?

Mr. Findley: In that sense, yes.

LS: Yes, good. But this is the only one with which I had to take issue. Now it has become clear from Mr. Findley's paper⁷ how right, how adequate is what Kant himself said about—[that] Rousseau has brought him into right shape. That which counts ultimately is morality—or call it moral wisdom, and theoretical wisdom is strictly subordinate to that.

ⁱ Strauss comments on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

And in this most important respect, morality and its essential implications (belief in God and in future life), the simplest man is in the no worse position than the greatest philosopher—at least the Profession of Faith; whether that is Rousseau's last word is another matter.

But you reminded us of another man to whom Kant defers by paying him the great honor of taking a motto from his work: Bacon—Bacon, by the way, also highly admired by Rousseau. Now⁸ this helps us perhaps a bit in understanding Kant's teaching as presented in this section, and in a way in his whole work. Of course we must take a broad view of Bacon and not limit ourselves to what Bacon explicitly teaches; I mean Bacon, as it were the originator of modern philosophy and broader than Galileo, surely. And however he might have been . . . as some people say, with the other modern science—you know, Harvey,ⁱⁱ this kind of thing, which we can rightly disregard. Now let us be a bit more precise historically and here speak also of Hobbes when we speak of Bacon.⁹ Hobbes was not too great a celebrator of Bacon, but in such matters contemporaries cannot be trusted. You know, there are all kinds of funny things there.

But now, [Kant says in his critique of pure theoretical reason, that metaphysical knowledge in the traditional sense of the word is impossible].¹⁰ Hence the theoretical life cannot be the highest life. *The* truly human life is the moral life. Now what was the Baconian-Hobbesian assertion regarding the so-called contemplative ideal? What did they say about theoretical knowledge or science, deviating from Aristotle?

Mr. Findley: Science properly understood is in the service of mankind.

LS: Ya, of what? I mean, they use a more precise word than “mankind,” surely. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: For the sake of power—

LS: Power.

Mr. Reinken: —for the relief of man's estate.

LS: Ya, but “power” is the decisive word: *scientia propter potentiam*. And here we see the difference from Kant. Kant would say—I mean, if one tries to have a simple formula: “Science for the sake of” what?

Mr. Findley: For the sake of, I suppose, morals. Or morality.

LS: Yes, yes.¹¹ It needs only a somewhat longish footnote, but it is correct nevertheless to say that because the end of man can never be theoretical perfection, but can only be morality. Good. So¹² as great as is the difference between power and morality, as great is the radical change which Kant effected in modern philosophy.

ⁱⁱ William Harvey (1578-1657), an English physician who was the first to give a scientific account of the circulation of blood and the role of the heart as a pump.

Now let us consider this regarding a parallel point, and that concerns happiness. What does Kant say about happiness, here in this section? We will hear more about it when we come to the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*. But what does he say here?

Mr. Findley: From the empirical point of view it's the ultimate end of all our desires and senses. It is the one word which combines everything that we seek for. That is, on an empirical basis.

LS: But is it the end of man?

Mr. Findley: Not as man. As—

LS: But as what?

Mr. Findley: As a sensual animal, as a—

LS: Ya, but does this work out? I mean, how do we go about it—I mean, what is happiness? Satisfaction of all our desires, or what?

Mr. Findley: Well, the problem is whether happiness, which is satisfaction from an empirical point of view, will be obtained from the moral point of view if the man is worthy of happiness.

LS: Ya, but we are speaking now of happiness.¹³ What Kant implies (and even states somewhere there) is [that] happiness is a very questionable end—a natural end, but a questionable end.¹⁴ Now let us look back to Aristotle to have some help in seeing what the peculiarity of Kant is. What does Aristotle say about the end of man? How does he call it?

Mr. Reinken: Well, *eudaimonia*, which we translate as happiness.

LS: Ya, yes. Let us translate it by happiness, as everyone did; and the etymology we can forget about because that may be necessary in other connections, but not now. Happiness, *felicitas* or *beatitude* . . . is the end of man. But sure, everyone agrees with that, and if one wants to have a paraphrase of it one can say, “an enviable state of being pleased,” “enviable satisfaction.” I say enviable because you find sometimes moronic people who are smiling all the time [laughter], and no one really envies them unless he is *very* unhappy and would exchange places with everyone. So it must be an enviable, an enviable state of satisfaction. But still, there are various forms of that—for example, some people regard wealthy men, as such, happy. Is Aristotle satisfied with that?

Student: No. [Laughter]

LS: No. Because he has lived too long to agree with that. But what is then happiness, according to Aristotle?

Student: The achievement of excellence.

LS: Ya, let us say virtuous activity . . . Activity, because if you are only dormant with your virtue, that's not good enough. Virtuous activity, yes. But this needs something else. Virtuous activity:¹⁵ Does this not have conditions?

Mr. Reinken: A modest competence.

LS: Yes, what Aristotle calls the equipment. So let us say V + E, that is happiness. But with the emphasis on virtuous activity, meaning that if you lose all your equipment and are in a terrible condition like Priam at the conquest of Troy—his happiness is undamaged because his nobility of character was undamaged, and¹⁶ he suffered very much but this gave him an occasion even to exercise moral virtue, his nobility, ya?

So we can say for Aristotle, the core of happiness is moral virtue; and for Kant, morality is something radically different from happiness. Radically different.¹⁷ You may be *perfectly* moral; that does not in any way guarantee to you happiness. In a passage which you read to us (which we cannot now read, which is on page 838 of the second edition or thereabouts), Kant states the problem in a way reminding of Plato's *Gorgias*. Let us say the good life consists in never acting unjustly. Never acting unjustly. But¹⁸ does this suffice for us? Do we not also desire not to suffer injustice? This has nothing to do with our morality; that has to do with the morality of other people. But we need both. And so just as Socrates distinguishes between¹⁹ *acting* justly or not acting unjustly, and *suffering* injustice or not suffering injustice, Kant distinguishes between morality here and happiness there. So happiness means something radically—[it] does not *include* morality. Nevertheless, there is a link between the two things and that is indicated by Kant's formula: happiness or, rather, Kant's formula: *worthiness* of happiness. Worthiness of happiness. Now what is behind it?

Now let us again look back at such people like Hobbes, Bacon, Locke . . . else. They may be said to say against Aristotle: You speak of *the* happiness, *the* natural good of man, but²⁰ that doesn't exist. I read to you just one passage from Hobbes,²¹ which is polemical, no doubt, but not against Aristotle in particular²². *Leviathan*, chapter 6, toward the end:

Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desires, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call FELICITY;—[felicity is happiness, same thing—LS] I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquility of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.ⁱⁱⁱ

And he doesn't speak of the happiness of the other life because he doesn't know anything of that, he says.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 6.

But the main point is this. Aristotle also spoke only of the happiness of this life. These are comparable statement[s]: for Hobbes there is no happiness in the sense of a state, of a level which it would be for Aristotle. Happiness, we can say—and in Hobbes or in Hobbes's name—is radically subjective. Different people have different notions of happiness, and the same man at different times. So happiness is something by which we cannot take our bearings at all because of its radical subjectivity. That's very bad, because²³ then how shall we guide our lives then, according to this man? [After all, how can there be a society of men, if there are no *common* goals]?²⁴ The answer which they give is this: while happiness is radically subjective (I mean, this is of course my bad modern lingo, but I must make myself understood)²⁵: there are *conditions* of happiness which apply to whatever you understand by happiness. And these are, in the first place, life; in the second place, you must be free to circulate: freedom.²⁶ Your possibility of becoming happy, whatever you understand by happiness, will be restrained if you are locked up. And third, you must have the freedom to pursue happiness as you understand happiness. I'm trying to quote the *Declaration of Independence*. So in other words, while happiness is radically subjective, there are *conditions* of happiness which are universally valid regardless of what you understand by happiness.

Now when Kant speaks of *worthiness* of happiness, he does something comparable to what these earlier thinkers did: to replace happiness by a condition of happiness, only he calls this condition now *worthiness* of happiness.²⁷ But this is strictly parallel to what I said before, that he replaces science for the sake of power by science for the sake of morality. Good.²⁸

Human reason is in need of discipline, of which he had spoken in the preceding section. But this is very humiliating for . . . reason, that reason itself should need a discipline. But fortunately for reason, reason itself alone can exercise this discipline. And then he turns here to the subject "The Canon of Pure Reason," meaning for the right use of pure reason, can concern only its practical use, as is stated in this first section.

Now let us turn to the first section of "The Last End of the Pure Use of our Reason."²⁹

Mr. Reinken: "Reason is impelled by a tendency of its nature—"iv

LS: "Of its nature." Let us not forget that reason has a nature. Now this nature is something different from the nature of which Kant generally speaks, but it is important that Kant can still speak, and must speak, of the nature of reason. Good.³⁰ Immediately after what read, back on page [B]825, he also speaks of the nature of reason.

Mr. Reinken: "to go out—"

LS: No, let us perhaps read on page 826. "The final—"

Mr. Reinken:

^{iv} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B825.

vaim to which the speculation of reason, in its transcendental employment is directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. In respect of all three the merely speculative interest of reason is very small; and for its sake alone we should hardly have undertaken the labor of transcendental investigation—a labor so fatiguing in its endless wrestling with insuperable difficulties—since whatever discoveries might be made in regard to these matters, we should not be able to make use of them in any helpful matter *in concreto*, that is, the study of nature. If the will be free, this can have a bearing only on the intelligible cause of our volition. For as regards the phenomena of its outward expressions, that is, of our actions, we must account for them—in accordance with a maxim which is inviolable, and which is so fundamental that without it we should not be able to employ reason in any empirical manner—^{vi}

LS: Well, we know that already. At the end of this paragraph. “With one word, these three.”

Mr. Reinken:

propositions are for speculative reason always transcendent, and allow of no immanent employment—that is, employment in reference to objects of experience, and so in some manner really of service to us—but are in themselves, notwithstanding the very heavy labors which they impose upon our reason, entirely useless.^{vii}

LS: Ya, and therefore,³¹ if these three cardinal propositions are in no way necessary for knowledge and yet they are nevertheless urgently recommended to us by our reason, then their importance can only concern the practical. And then he speaks, or explains, what the practical is, which was restated properly by Mr. Findley. And then the distinction between pragmatic laws and moral laws: pragmatic laws,³² laws of *prudence* aiming at our happiness, happiness understood in an amoral sense, whereas moral laws are radically distinguishable. Now, in the paragraph after the next: “The whole—”

Mr. Reinken: “equipment of reason—”^{viii}

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

in the discipline which may be entitled pure philosophy, is in fact determined with a view to the three above-mentioned problems. These, however, themselves in turn refer us yet further, namely, to the problem *what we ought to do*, if the will is free, if there is a God and a future world. As this concerns our attitude to the

^v In original: “ultimate”

^{vi} Ibid., B826.

^{vii} Ibid., B827.

^{viii} Ibid., B828.

supreme end, it is evident that the ultimate intention of nature in her wise provision for us has indeed, in the constitution of our reason, been directed to moral interests alone.^{ix}

LS: Ya, you see³³ the way in which Kant here speaks in the language of a teleological theology. Physical theology. Now Kant does not make here clear, as he does later on, that this whole physical theology—that there is a nature wisely providing for us, that this is, cannot be theoretically true; it cannot be asserted as a theoretical truth. But nevertheless, the whole argument here is: What is the purpose of nature in preventing us from having theoretical knowledge regarding God and immortality while enabling us to have a moral faith in a God and immortality? Here freedom of God and immortality are presented as presuppositions of morality, and they are explicitly so called later on. That is not exactly what Kant means, as comes out in his later moral writings.

Now regarding freedom there is an important passage on page [B]830, if you will turn to that. He repeats first what he had said before, in the passage we have read last time, on the distinction between the *arbitrium brutum* and the *arbitrium liberum*. Immediately after that. “Practical freedom.”

Mr. Reinken:

freedom can be proved through experience. For the human will is not determined by that alone which stimulates, that is, immediately affects the senses; we have the power to overcome the impressions on our faculty of sensuous desire, by calling up representations of what, in a more indirect manner, is useful or injurious. But these considerations, as to what is desirable in respect of our whole state, that is, as to what is good and useful, are based on reason. Reason therefore provides laws which are imperatives, that is, *objective laws of freedom*, which tell us *what ought to happen*—although perhaps it never does happen—therein differing from *laws of nature*, which relate only to *that which happens*. These laws are therefore to be entitled practical laws.^x

LS: Now this distinction which Kant makes here between laws of nature and laws of freedom is used throughout by Kant in his later writings. And this is a milestone, that Kant does no longer speak of natural laws in the traditional sense, the moral laws, but limits natural laws to natural laws in the Newtonian sense. The moral laws are called laws of freedom. This break with nature, of which we will see more, is indicated by the terms. But the point, which you surely observed [is]: practical freedom can be demonstrated by experience. So if we . . . what experience means here is hard to say, whether he means here the experience of natural science or ordinary experience. I believe it is safer to assume he means by that ordinary experience.

Now there comes a rather strange passage, on page [B]831.

^{ix} Ibid., B828-829.

^x Ibid., B830.

Mr. Reinken:

Whether reason is not, in the actions through which it prescribes laws, itself again determined by other influences, and whether that which, in relation to sensuous impulses, is entitled freedom, may not, in relation to higher and more remote operating causes, be nature again, is a question which in the practical field does not concern us, since we are demanding of reason nothing but the *rule* of conduct; it is a merely speculative question, which we can leave aside so as long as we are considering what ought or what ought not be done.^{xi}

LS: So in other words, how this freedom would look if we had transempirical knowledge, no one can say. And this of course can also give rise to an extreme skepticism. That it may again be nature, what does this mean? But Kant says, at any rate, for our practical use it's of no interest because we cannot know anything of what he calls transcendental freedom. And the practical freedom—how does he go on here? “We.”

Mr. Reinken:

While we thus through experience know practical freedom to be one of the causes in nature, namely, to be a causality of reason in the determination of the will, transcendental freedom demands the independence of this reason—in respect of its causality, in beginning a series of appearances—from all determining causes of the sensible world. Transcendental freedom is thus, as it would seem, contrary to the law of nature, and therefore to all possible experience; and so remains a problem.^{xii}

LS:³⁴ This is, I think, a rather loose restatement of what he had said in discussing the antinomy between natural causality and causality of freedom.

Now let us turn then to the second section, “The Ideal of the Highest Good.” Now we have heard³⁵ Kant's formulation here in the second paragraph: “All interests of *my* reason.” He says here “my reason,” because the questions are: What can *I* know? What ought *I* to do? What can *I* hope? And this is confirmed by what he says later on page [B]857: “One cannot say, it *is* morally certain that there is a God, but only, *I* am morally certain.”^{xiii} This is strictly concerning me: existential, as people have called it later; it cannot be an objective certainty.

Now the key question is, of course, for Kant here: What may I hope? Well, because the other has been answered in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the first, and the second is not problematic from Kant's point of view because we have the moral law within us. But the third question—will you read that please, what he said? On page [B]8[33]—

Mr. Reinken:

^{xi} Ibid., B831.

^{xii} Ibid.

^{xiii} In original: “I must not even say, ‘it is morally certain that there is a God, etc.’ but ‘I am morally certain, etc.’”

The third question—If I do what I ought to do, what may I then hope?—is at once practical and theoretical, in such fashion that the practical serves only as a clue that leads us to the answer to the theoretical question, and when this is followed out, to the speculative question. For all *hoping* is directed to happiness, and stands in the same relation to the practical and the law of morality as *knowing and the law of nature* to the theoretical knowledge of things. The former arrives finally at the conclusion that *something is* (which determines the ultimate possible end) *because something ought to happen*; the latter, that *something is* (which operates as the supreme cause) *because something does happen*.^{xiv36}

LS: Now what does he mean by the former and the latter?³⁷ What is the former and what is the latter?

Mr. Findley: The first is the law of morality; the second . . .

LS: Ya, more precisely, the practical, and the second is the theoretical. Yes. That's correct. Yes, and now he goes over then to the distinction between happiness and the worthiness of happiness. Yes.³⁸ The distinction is clear? Someone may be worthy of happiness without being happy, I suppose; and worthy of happiness can only be the morally good man, as Kant will explain later on. Now let us turn to page [B]835.

Mr. Reinken: "I assume that there really are pure moral laws—"xv

LS: See, it's important: "I assume." Kant has not established that, and in a way he does not establish it at all in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But we have to turn to the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*. Begin again.

Mr. Reinken:

I assume that there really are pure moral laws which determine completely *a priori* (without regard to empirical motives, that is, to happiness) what is and is not to be done, that is, which determine the employment of the freedom of a rational being in general; and that these laws command in an *absolute* manner (not merely hypothetically, on the supposition of other empirical ends), and are therefore in every respect, necessary. I am justified in making this assumption, in that I can appeal not only to the proofs employed by the most enlightened moralists, but to the moral judgment of every man, in so far as he makes the effort to think such a law clearly. Pure reason—xvi

LS: Ya, that is of course hard—I mean, if he thinks such a law, then he must think of it³⁹ as absolutely commanding. But must he conceive of morality in terms of law? That would be the question.⁴⁰ Now go on.

^{xiv} Ibid., B833-834.

^{xv} Ibid., B835.

^{xvi} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

Pure reason, then, contains, not indeed in its speculative employment, but in that practical employment which is also moral, principles of the *possibility of experience*, namely, of such actions as, in accordance with moral precepts, *might* be met with in the *history* of mankind.^{xvii}

LS: “Of man.” Ya, “history” has here a very innocent meaning. I mean . . . people, chroniclers, or a newspaper-made record, yes, has nothing to do with philosophy of history. Go on, ya.

Mr. Reinken:

For since reason commands that such actions should take place, it must be possible for them to take place. Consequently—^{xviii}

LS: Because reason cannot be unreasonable, ya? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Consequently, a special kind of systematic unity, namely the moral, must likewise be possible. We have indeed found that the systematic unity of nature cannot be proved *in accordance with speculative principles of reason*. For although reason does indeed have causality in respect of freedom in general, it does not have causality in respect of nature as a whole; and although moral principles of reason can indeed give rise to free actions, they cannot give rise to laws of nature. Accordingly it is in their practical, meaning thereby their moral, employment, that the principles of pure reason have objective reality.^{xix}

LS: Ya. Now, what does Kant mean by that, when he says that reason has indeed, in regard to freedom in general but not in regard to the whole nature, causality?⁴¹ He followed the German sentence structure. Reason has causality in regard to freedom in general, but not in regard to the whole of nature.

Mr. Reinken: The existence of rational beings is not *a priori* necessary.

LS: Ya, surely not. But that is not, I think, what he means here. I mean, reason vouches for the possibility of acting morally. For “thou oughtst,” hence “thou canst”: that follows. If I know that this is my duty, I *know* that I can fulfill it; otherwise it couldn’t be my duty.⁴² But reason has no causality in regard to the whole of nature, and this is exactly the point: we cannot vouch for our happiness. We can make ourselves *worthy* of happiness, but⁴³ our power stops there. Or, to come back to the *Gorgias*, we can refrain from acting unjustly but we cannot prevent other people from doing injustice to us. And therefore, if we want to have a harmony between acting justly and not suffering injustice, this cannot

^{xvii} Ibid.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Ibid., B835-836.

be achieved by man but only by a being which has causality in regard to the whole of nature—that's to say, God. This is the connection. Stated a little bit later on page [B]836, bottom.⁴⁴

Mr. Reinken:

This is the answer to the first of the two questions of pure reason that concern its practical interest: —*Do that through which thou becomest worthy to be happy.* The second question is:—If I so behave as not to be unworthy of happiness, may I hope thereby to obtain happiness? In answering this question we have to consider whether the principles of pure reason, which prescribe the law *a priori*, likewise connect this hope necessarily with it.^{xx}

LS: Is the question understood?⁴⁵ I mean, assuming that reason, pure reason, prescribes pure moral laws, does it therefore follow that pure reason entitles us to *hope* for that reward for our moral actions, without which reward there would be a terrible disharmony within the world between goodness, or virtue, and the reward for virtue? And Kant says: Yes, this is indeed the case.⁴⁶ Let us read on page [B]838, the second paragraph on that page. Kant's answer, to repeat, is in the affirmative.⁴⁷ We are entitled, even compelled, to hope for the existence of such a supreme intelligence which rewards virtue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Yes, I think seven's rearranged.

The idea of such an intelligence in which the most perfect moral will, united with supreme blessedness, is the cause of all happiness in the world—so far as happiness stands in exact relation with morality, that is, with worthiness to be happy—I entitle the *ideal of the supreme good*.^{xxi}

LS: Namely, the ideal of such an intelligence or, simply stated, the supreme good is God, which is of course the traditional view. But in Kant it comes in here⁴⁸ as a necessary *implication*, not to say consequence, of morality. There is no theoretical knowledge of the existence of God, of course. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:⁴⁹ “It is, therefore, only in the ideal of the supreme *original* good, that—”^{xxii}

LS: “Original good,” namely, because there are derivative goods, like men. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

that pure reason can find the ground of this connection, which is necessary from the practical point of view, between the two elements of the supreme derivative good—the ground, namely, of an intelligible, that is, *moral* world. Now since we are necessarily constrained by reason to represent ourselves as belonging to such a world, while the senses present to us

^{xx} Ibid., B836-837.

^{xxi} Ibid., B838.

^{xxii} Ibid.

nothing but a world of phenomena^{xxiii}, we must assume that moral world to be a consequence of our conduct in the world of sense (in which no such connection between worthiness and happiness is exhibited), and therefore to be for us a future world. Thus God and a future life are two postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligation which that same reason imposes upon us.^{xxiv}

LS: Ya. he couldn't express himself more strongly. In other words, if there is a moral law, then we are compelled to hope⁵⁰ that God exists and that there is a future life. So Kant really does what Rousseau was aiming at in the Profession of Faith,⁵¹ [of] which I spoke in the first meeting, namely, to find a metaphysical teaching which would be strictly related to morality and nothing else. So what Rousseau, or his person, the Savoyard Vicar, tried to do but failed to do, Kant succeeds in doing it, at least much better. Yes. Now is there any difficulty? Kant⁵² uses even stronger language.⁵³ Let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Morality, by itself, constitutes a system. Happiness, however, does not do so, save in so far as it is distributed in exact proportion to morality.^{xxv}

LS: Now that happiness is not a system is a somewhat scholastic way of saying it⁵⁴ does not have an order of preference, you know? And therefore it cannot be an ideal of reason; it can only be an ideal of the imagination, as Kant puts it elsewhere. And therefore happiness cannot be the standard; only morality can be the standard—but morality calls, or cries, for a harmony between morality and happiness. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

But this is possible only in the intelligible world, under a wise Author and Ruler. Such a Ruler, together with life in such a world, which we must regard as a future world, reason finds itself constrained to assume; otherwise it would have to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without this postulate the necessary consequence which it itself connects with these laws—^{xxvi}

LS: Who says, "postulate"?

Mr. Reinken: Norman Kemp Smith.

LS: Ya, not Kant. [Laughter] Kant later on speaks of postulates of pure reason . . . practical reason, but he doesn't call them here in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, since the necessary effect of the saying—

^{xxiii} In original: "appearances"

^{xxiv} Ibid., B838-839.

^{xxv} Ibid., B839.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: Would not follow.

LS: Which the same reason connects with them would not follow without that *presupposition*. Now postulate and presupposition are not the same thing. It is a very strong statement. Morality becomes an empty thing. How does Brutus say in *Julius Caesar* about virtue after the loss of the Battle of Philippi? Virtue: A shadow, a dream: but for God and the future life. Yes. Go on, read this; finish this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Hence also everyone regards the moral laws as *commands*; and this the moral laws could not be if they did not connect *a priori* suitable consequences with their rules, and thus carry with them *promises* and *threats*. But this again they could not do, if they did not reside in a necessary being, as the supreme good, which alone can make such a purposive unity possible.^{xxvii}

LS: Yes. Now, Mr. Londow?

Mr. Londow: Oh, yes. At the beginning of section [B]838⁵⁵ there's a suggestion that if everyone acted according to the moral law, in other words, if there were a society in which not only one individual acted justly, but everyone acted justly, then there would be no possibility of your being treated unjustly. And so the demands of the *Gorgias* would be fulfilled, and morality in that sense, if there were a perfect society, would be self-rewarding. And if that is a possibility, then it would seem that God and a future life are no longer—

LS: Yes!⁵⁶ I am glad, happy that you bring that up. What would this be in theological language, but also in Kant's language? Yes?

Mr. Londow: That's . . . that's outside of our life.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Londow: That's Heaven,⁵⁷ that can't be in our life.

Student: The City of God.

LS: Ya. No: the realm of God *on earth*,⁵⁸ sure! That was exactly the point which later on was the objection of some people in the nineteenth century—the communists especially, but not only them; to some extent Hegel. I mean, the successors of Kant attacked him on the ground that he wanted to have a reward,⁵⁹ or for that matter the punishment, the harmony which can reasonably be expected between acting justly and not suffering injustice, can be brought about by an improved social-political life.⁶⁰ And Kant is very much concerned with this *earthly* condition, otherwise he would not have written the *Perpetual Peace* and other things. But all the more urgent becomes the question: What kept Kant back from the seemingly obvious solution to the problem? What was it?

^{xxvii} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B839-840.

Mr. Reinken: *Zensur*.

LS:⁶¹ Meaning censorship. No, that will not suffice. That is one of the most difficult questions in the case of most of the writers, of the not-quite-orthodox writers of the eighteenth century. One can of course say when confronted with such difficulties: At least consider that they might keep something up their sleeves, but not in the case of Kant! Because⁶² his moral principles would exclude it, and we will come to that. No, that is true; we will see that.⁶³ Kant is very much alive to the⁶⁴ morally questionable character of saying things which one does not believe, much more than Plato or Socrates. [Laughter] Why do you laugh? [Laughter]⁶⁵ I mean, can you explain why⁶⁶ you're laughing? I mean, I don't criticize, but I would like to learn something.

Student: Because usually we think of saying something that you don't mean as being in some sense immoral.

LS: Who says something which he does not mean? Ya, but look what Plato does: the noble lie! Or Socrates, in the *Republic*.⁶⁷ And he's worse! I mean, not only does he commit a noble lie: he asks and urges any founders of this perfect city to use the noble lie.⁶⁸ I mean, what—

Same Student: There are societies—

LS: What is so exhilarating? [Laughter] That I would like to know. That Kant should be more moralistic than Plato and Socrates? Is that the problem? Or what do you think?

Same Student: Well, I guess—

LS: That's it?

Same Student: I don't think that he is more moralistic . . . [laughter]. In common discourse, lying is considered immoral.⁶⁹ [This is] one of the problems of our morality: Is this lying?

LS: But may I tell you as a matter of fact that Kant explicitly taught that lying is universally evil? He was even wondering whether such little lies, like "Your humble servant" at the end of the letter [laughter] might not be morally bad. I believe he admitted the letter; he was not *too* . . . but in other points it goes very far, very far. For example,⁷⁰ risings against a beastly tyrant: strictly forbidden (as the Germans say: *streng verboten*). Why? Because you cannot make a rising without conspiring unless you are a complete loner, and then that won't work. And so you must conspire, but "conspire" means of course, to lie. Someone asks you: Why do you talk to this fellow all the time? [Laughter]

Student: Bridge.

LS: And then you say: We play bridge. [Laughter] Why? So far does it go in the case of Kant. [LS laughs] Ya, it is very remarkable, and a kind of comment that when we discuss such questions we must laugh. That is part of the problem. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: Man . . .

LS: There is something, something wicked in us [laughter] that we enjoy talking—at least *some* immoralities, when talked about, hm? I mean, for example, murder would not cause such an exhilaration, I think. [Laughter]

Student: *Playboy of the Western World*.^{xxviii}

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: *Playboy of the Western World*, by Synge.

LS: I can't remember, what is a playboy?

Same Student: There's a play called *Playboy of the Western World*.

LS: Oh, I don't know of that. And what is this play about?

Same Student: Well, it's a comedy about a man who has killed his father—[students laugh at length] . . . and⁷¹ the peasants think it's very funny when he talks about it and they think it's wonderful, but when they see it they think it's terrible.

LS: But was this murderer of his father by any chance an intellectual? [Laughter]

Same Student: It didn't really happen, but he thought it did. And they thought it did.

LS: I see. No, because they might have laughed about the intellectual as intellectual, and regardless of what he did do.

Same Student: Well, yeah, they laughed about it when they only heard about it.

LS: I see.

Same Student: Then they saw it and then they didn't think it was funny anymore.

LS: Well, ya, sure. Well, I'm glad to hear it. [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: . . . what I think that the occasion of the laughter is. It's the *Cyropaedia*, book 1, end.^{xxix} . . . we agree with Kant, and you remind us what Socrates did; our reaction is that of Cyrus when he said: Oh, but you *can* do these things! Kant—

^{xxviii} John Millington Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1997). Debuted January 26, 1907 in Dublin.

LS: Ya, but you speak—

Mr. Reinken: brings us up as nobly as a Persian—

LS:⁷² I mean only those who have read the *Education of Cyrus* can follow Mr. Reinken. Can you state that? Because . . . [Laughter]

Student: Well, Cyrus is different. Cyrus had been brought up as a good Persian boy: Thou shall not kill, steal, loot; never tell fibs; play no tricks. And then Papa took him out to go hunting [laughter] across the frontiers, and Papa told—

LS: Ya, I think there was a boar, I think . . .

Mr. Reinken: Yes, and pointed out to him that, “All right, you’re a big boy now. You use your wits.” “I did— I don’t know how.” “But you know all about it. Didn’t we teach you to hunt and to deceive animals?” And Cyrus *laughed*.

LS: In other words,⁷³ this double morality, that in war we *may* cheat, ya, and the laughing is of course the same phenomenon which we have here. [Laughter] Some hidden assent to such terrible things.

Student: Maybe the laughter could also be involved with a higher comedy, like the idea that someone who lies might indeed be more moral than someone who doesn’t.

LS: Yes, there are such cases.⁷⁴ But Kant denies that. Kant denies that. He has to engage in a casuistry which is not free from difficulties. We’ll come to that when we read the smaller writings of Kant.

Student: There does seem to have been a historical incident when Kant was called before the King for his theological writings, and—

LS: Ya.

Same Student: required not to publish anything further of a similar nature.

LS: Ya, that was easy; then he didn’t say anything, and that is not lying. [Laughter] That was Kant’s—

Same Student: But that’s not speaking the truth either. [Laughter]

LS: Ya,⁷⁵ that is a distinction which Kant makes. If you don’t say anything, then you do not lie. But you can say that is a very subtle thing, and—

^{xxix} Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*, trans. Wayne Ambler (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001). Also known as the *Cyropaedia*.

Same Student: Yes. [Laughter]

LS: Sure.⁷⁶ Good. Now is there any other point regarding this matter?⁷⁷ Let us see, in order to understand Kant's argument a bit better, on page [B]841, the first paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: "Happiness, taken, " or "Thus, without a God"?

LS: No, "Happiness."

Mr. Reinken:

Happiness, taken by itself, is, for our reason, far from being the complete good. Reason does not approve happiness (however inclination may desire it) except in so far as it is united with worthiness to be happy, that is, with moral conduct. Morality, taken by itself, and with it, the mere *worthiness* to be happy, is also far from being the complete good. To make the good complete, he who behaves in such a manner as not to be unworthy of happiness must be able to hope that he will participate in happiness. Even the reason that is free from all private purposes, should it put itself in the place of a being that had to distribute all happiness to others, cannot judge otherwise; for in the practical idea both elements are essentially connected, though in such a manner that it is the moral disposition which conditions and makes possible the participation in happiness, and not conversely the prospect of happiness that makes possible the moral disposition.^{xxx}

LS: That is crucial, of course, and that is a clearer statement than we found before. I mean, if the motivation is, as it seemed to appear from the earlier statement, that morality has no force unless I can be assured of a reward, then I act immorally. But⁷⁸ I must wish for God and future life from morality, as it were, not thinking so much of *my* future reward but of the future reward of other people. Yes. Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: The "Thy kingdom come" commandment.

LS: Yes. Now let us see. And Kant tries to show in the sequel, on page [B]842 following, that the moral theology—i.e., a theology which follows from the demands of morality as distinguished from a physical theology, a theology based on the observation of order in nature—that only a moral theology can lead to the God as one most perfect and intelligent original being, whereas theoretical reasoning would never lead [there], in no case. Even if it were to lead to God, it would not lead to⁷⁹ one God and would not lead to a reasonable God.

Here is one point which is quite remarkable, on page [B]843. That there must be *one* highest God, one highest will. "For how could—"

^{xxx} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B841.

Mr. Reinken: “under different wills, should we find complete unity of ends”?^{xxx}

LS: Ya, but there is a question: If these gods were all of super-human rationality, why should they not—?

Mr. Reinken: They’d have a perpetual peace treaty. [Laughter]

LS: Ya, no treaty; it would not be necessary. A complete *philia*, complete friendship among them.

Now so deeply is Kant indebted [to] or under the spell of the biblical tradition. There is another sign of that now, first of all⁸⁰ towards the bottom of page [B]844, where Kant says very simply and strong[ly] that the highest purposes are those of morality. That admits of no question. Kant will state this⁸¹ in more detailed form, in a very powerful and appealing form, at the beginning of the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Then we have a point which is quite interesting in an author like Kant, on page [B]845, toward the end of the page, when he speaks of⁸² the history of human reason.

Mr. Reinken:

Accordingly we find, in the history of human reason, that until the moral concepts were sufficiently purified and determined, and until the systematic unity of their ends was understood in accordance with these concepts and from necessary principles, the knowledge of nature, and even a quite considerable development of reason in many other sciences, could give rise only to crude and incoherent concepts of the Deity, or as sometimes happened resulted in an astonishing indifference in regard to all such matters.^{xxxii}

LS: So in other words, the cultivation of reason, of theoretical reason, did not have any serious effect on man’s notions of God. But the cultivation of the *moral*, of morality did. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

A greater preoccupation with moral ideas, which was rendered necessary by the extraordinarily pure moral law of our religion, made reason more acutely aware of its object, through the interest which it was compelled to take in it.^{xxxiii}

LS: Yes. What is “our religion”? Excuse me; excuse this seemingly improper question, but there are authors where one never knows what they mean by “we” or “our.” What is it in Kant?

Mr. Reinken: Christianity.

^{xxx} Ibid., B843.

^{xxxii} Ibid., B845.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

LS: There can be not the slightest doubt, ya, sure. But it is very rare. I do not have a concordance of Kant; I think there is none in existence. It would be interesting to see whether Kant, apart from his writing on religion, speaks of “our” religion. It’s very rare, I think. I know this about it. Yes.

Now⁸³ in the last paragraph of this section he makes clear, there is no deduction of the moral laws from the moral theology possible, of course, because the moral laws logically precede the moral theology. Now towards the end . . . On page [B]847.

Mr. Reinken: “So far, then”?

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

as practical reason has the right to serve as our guide, we shall not look upon actions as obligatory because they are the commands of God, but shall regard them as divine commands because we have an inward obligation to them.^{xxxiv}

LS: So in other words, there are no divine commands. We cannot regard any commands as divine except the moral laws. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

We shall study freedom according to the purposive unity that is determined in accordance with the principles of reason, and shall believe ourselves to be acting in conformity with the divine will in so far only as we hold sacred the moral law which reason teaches us from the nature of the actions themselves; and we shall believe that we can serve that will only by furthering what is best in the world, alike in ourselves and in others.^{xxxv}

LS: Let us stop here. Now this is Kant’s last word about religion. Religion consists in regarding the moral laws (and of course in *obeying* the moral laws) as divine commands. There are no duties toward God distinguished from the duties toward ourselves and others. The—how does he say “*das Weltbeste*”?⁸⁴ The last sentence you read?: “The best in the world.” We can also say “the best *of* the world.” I mean, we have to make the world as good as possible: God does not need us in any way. There is no place⁸⁵ for prayer and other acts of worship of whatever . . . In other words, there are no duties towards God different from our duties toward men. Well, if you look what has happened in theology and in religious practice in many parts of the Western world, you know that here you have one of the sources of that.

Now we come then to the last section.⁸⁶ The striking thing about it is that Kant distinguishes here three kinds of faith. Pragmatic faith, say, the faith which a physician has that this [LS taps on the table] is the treatment for this particular disease. He cannot

^{xxxiv} Ibid., B847.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

know, perhaps, but⁸⁷ he is willing to risk his reputation and what have you, not only the life of the patient. So he's sure of that. And doctrinal faith—for example, Kant has a doctrinal faith that there are human beings on some other planets, i.e., he doesn't know, but it seems highly probable to him, and he would invest all the savings (if any) which he had, in making possible an expedition to another planet.⁸⁸ And then moral faith, faith based on morality. There is nothing said about religious faith here. That is quite interesting.

Mr. Reinken: Well, [B]854: “we must admit the doctrine of the existence of God belongs to doctrinal belief.”^{xxxvi}⁸⁹ Which is not covenantal loyalty! But it's a sort of religious question.

LS: That is true, ya, but not in sense in which we have—

Mr. Reinken: . . .

LS:⁹⁰ as the example which he gave before—was that about life on other planets, ya? All right, read this, what you began to read. “Now we must confess—”

Mr. Reinken:

that the doctrine of the existence of God belongs to doctrinal belief. For as regards theoretical knowledge of the world, I can *cite* nothing which necessarily presupposes this thought as the condition of my explanations of the appearances exhibited by the world, but rather am bound so to employ my reason as if everything were mere nature. Purposive unity is, however, so important a condition of the application of reason to nature that I cannot ignore it, especially as experience supplies me so richly with examples of it. But I know no other condition under which this unity can supply me with guidance in the investigation of nature, save only the postulate that a supreme intelligence has ordered all things in accordance with the wisest ends.^{xxxvii}

LS: Yes, and then read on page [B]855 bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

But the merely doctrinal belief is somewhat lacking in stability; we often lose hold of it, owing to the speculative difficulties which we encounter, although in the end we always inevitably return to it.^{xxxviii}

LS: Ya, but the final discussion of this problem of the teleology of nature—is it possible to give an account of living beings without assuming physiotheology?—is found in the *Critique of Judgment*.⁹¹ Now read the next sentence.

^{xxxvi} Ibid., B854.

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} Ibid., B855-856.

Mr. Reinken: “It is quite otherwise with *moral belief*.”^{xxxix}

LS: Ya, so⁹² I qualify my statement. You called this religious belief. You may.

Mr. Reinken: No, natural theology.

LS: You may. But Kant doesn’t call it that.⁹³ Surely Kant does not explicitly speak of religious belief here, in this section.

Mr. Reinken: . . . is not a *pistis*.

LS: Ya. So we leave it at that. Perhaps we come back to—ya, this statement at the end is quite impressive, bringing out the closeness of Kant to Rousseau of which I have spoken before.

¹ Deleted “very much.”

² Deleted “with....”

³ Deleted “Pascal’s problem does not....”

⁴ Deleted “what....”

⁵ Deleted “Pascal says only....”

⁶ Deleted “is it not...can it not....”

⁷ Deleted “that....”

⁸ Deleted “what....”

⁹ Deleted “That....”

¹⁰ Changed from “What...what is...Kant says in his...by his critique of pure theoretical reason, metaphysical knowledge is impossible, and...metaphysical in the traditional sense of the word.”

¹¹ Deleted “It must....”

¹² Deleted “and....”

¹³ Deleted “In....”

¹⁴ Deleted “How does this....”

¹⁵ Deleted “can you....”

¹⁶ Deleted “was....”

¹⁷ Deleted “By being....”

¹⁸ Deleted “this...still, are we...is....”

¹⁹ Deleted “*doing*”

²⁰ Deleted “this is....”

²¹ Deleted “which is not....”

²² Deleted “‘*Continual*—”

²³ Deleted “it’s....”

²⁴ Changed from “Now they have this simple...after all, there must be...how can there be a society of men, if there are no *common* goals?”

²⁵ Deleted “while radical...while happiness is radically subjective.”

²⁶ Deleted “Your happiness will be....”

²⁷ Deleted “I.e....”

²⁸ Deleted “Now, let me see. There are quite a few things which we have to consider here. Where shall we begin? Well, he states at the beginning of today’s assignment, page 600...no, which is that? Kant’s quote...ah, page 823. We won’t read that now.”

²⁹ Deleted “Do you have it? That is page— **Reinken:** Yes, [inaudible word]. [825B] **LS:** Yeah. ‘Reason—”

³⁰ Deleted “He speaks of the....”

³¹ Deleted “they can only be of the....”

^{xxxix} Ibid., B856.

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- 32 Deleted "laws aiming...."
- 33 Deleted "with...."
- 34 Deleted "Yeah but he has discussed it...."
- 35 Deleted "this...."
- 36 Text has "*something happens*" and is missing punctuation.
- 37 Deleted "Which...."
- 38 Deleted "Let us turn...and we have these...."
- 39 Deleted "in...."
- 40 Deleted "Now, the...I will refer again to...."
- 41 Deleted "That I...."
- 42 Deleted "Now, but what about...."
- 43 Deleted "there is...."
- 44 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'This is the answer'? **LS:** Yes, yes."
- 45 Deleted "Just...."
- 46 Deleted "Perhaps we...it is a rather long passage. No."
- 47 Deleted "There...."
- 48 Deleted "as a kind...."
- 49 Deleted "'Now—' sorry."
- 50 Deleted "for...."
- 51 Deleted "to which I spoke...."
- 52 Deleted "is even stronger: let us read the next...."
- 53 Deleted "One moment, Mr. Lander."
- 54 Deleted "is...."
- 55 Deleted "**LS:** Beginning of? **Mr. Lander:** Beginning of 838, there..."
- 56 Deleted "That is indeed...."
- 57 Deleted "that's not...."
- 58 Deleted "That would...."
- 59 Deleted "The harmony of...."
- 60 Deleted "And that is...."
- 61 Deleted "No...."
- 62 Deleted "his morality would...."
- 63 Deleted "That is a very...."
- 64 Deleted "question...."
- 65 Deleted "What's...."
- 66 Deleted "it's."
- 67 Deleted "He says...and...."
- 68 Deleted "**Same Student:** True, but [inaudible words]—"
- 69 Deleted "And then we talk...."
- 70 Deleted "revolutions against...."
- 71 Deleted "and the peasant...and the people...."
- 72 Deleted "only...."
- 73 Deleted "that...."
- 74 Deleted "I mean, you would, surely...there...."
- 75 Deleted "that's a...you are not...."
- 76 Deleted "I...."
- 77 Deleted "So we have already seen...yeah, let us see...."
- 78 Deleted "the moral...."
- 79 Deleted "a."
- 80 Deleted "on page...."
- 81 Deleted "more...."
- 82 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'A great preoccupation'? **LS:** No. **Reinken:** 'And this came about—' **LS:** When he speaks of."
- 83 Deleted "at the end of the...."
- 84 Deleted "How does it?"
- 85 Deleted "for such...."

⁸⁶ Deleted “which is....”

⁸⁷ Deleted “the best....”

⁸⁸ Deleted “But....”

⁸⁹ Deleted “**LS:** 8— on which page? **Reinken:** 854. **LS:** Yeah, yeah but, but— **Reinken:** Which is not....”

⁹⁰ Deleted “we as....”

⁹¹ Deleted “And this is not....”

⁹² Deleted “what I meant....”

⁹³ Deleted “But any religious belief...as....”

Session 5: April 18, 1967

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —so that we turn today to Kant's moral doctrine. And we have discussed insufficiently, but sufficiently for our present purpose I hope, Kant's theoretical philosophy. Now I would like to summarize the result first, so that we don't forget it when we turn to Kant's moral teachings.

Now in order to understand Kant's theoretical doctrine as presented especially in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we must consider pre-Kantian rationalism in order to understand the change effected by Kant. Now I take as an example Spinoza's critique of miracles in the *Theological-Political Treatise*. Now when we analyze Spinoza's argument, we discern a twofold argument: first, miracles are impossible; second, miracles are unknowable. These are two different propositions. Roughly, regarding the second point, Spinoza's argument is [this]: for the fact that we do not know a natural cause of a given event does not prove that there is not a natural cause to be discovered in the future. This is also not sufficient for Spinoza's purpose, as one could show, and therefore it is supplemented by another argument, namely:¹ the biblical miracles are not events of which we know directly, but we know of them only through reports. Are these reports trustworthy? Have the observations been made by trained observers or by simple people without such training, etc.?

Now let us discuss² the first point, the impossibility of miracles. This is presented by Spinoza in the *Theological-Political Treatise* as derivative from a certain theological thesis, namely, that the intellect of God and the will of God are identical. This is, as Spinoza presents it, an wholly arbitrary premise. Ultimately, this would lead back to the argument presented in Spinoza's *Ethics*, and especially in the definitions occurring at the beginning of the *Ethics*. There Spinoza gives some definitions, for example of "substance," "accident," and so on and so on, which are modifications of the traditional definitions. No reasoning is given why³ these definitions should be superior to the traditional ones. These definitions are unevident—arbitrary, one can say. But they are not meant to be arbitrary: they derive their evidence from the purpose which they serve, namely, how to give a clear and distinct account of the whole. In present day language: how to give a scientific account of the whole.

It is presupposed, as already in Descartes, that the clear and distinct account is identical with the true account. But this is⁴ a questionable assertion, for it would mean that what is not clearly and distinctly known or knowable is not. But why should this be? It would be a great convenience if it were, but this is not a good enough reason. And Spinoza expresses the whole position in one simple proposition, occurring in the second book of the *Ethics*: "We possess adequate knowledge of the essence of God," which no theologian would ever—and also non-theologian would ever have granted.ⁱ But if we possess adequate knowledge of the ground of everything, then there is no question that we can get adequate knowledge, clear and distinct knowledge, of everything. [So the proof of the impossibility of miracles rests on very questionable foundations].⁵

ⁱ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, book 2, proposition 47.

What about the proof of the unknowability of miracles? This has a certain plausibility because it is simply guided by the spirit of empirical causal explanation.⁶ Well, if we can't give a causal explanation of a given event, that doesn't settle the issue because there may be such an explanation in the *future*, with the progress of science. But this has one drawback. There might be miracles, although we would never *know* them. This seems to protect the sphere of man completely against any possible miracles, because we can never know them.⁷ And in other words,⁸ this corresponds to Kant's distinction: the world of experience, of possible experience, and the world of the thing in itself, of which we can have no knowledge. But there is one difficulty here: Could the world in itself not be accessible on the basis of *faith*? And then, of course, miracles would be not knowable but believable.

Now let us turn now to Kant. Kant takes it for granted that miracles are unknowable. We cannot possibly experience a breach in the natural laws. So, this is set. But this reasoning, which disposes of the miracles, disposes at the same time of freedom. Spinoza knew that and he liked that [laughter], but Kant is very dissatisfied with this state of affairs. So Kant's problem can therefore be stated as follows: How can one assert freedom without letting in miracles again? And that is the problem which Kant has to solve and which he solves fundamentally by his moral theology. A moral world subject to a law of its own, the moral law, which also excludes miracles. There are two different laws: the laws of nature and the laws of freedom and they, between them, make miracles impossible. For example, miracles have something to do presumably with divine grace: undeserved happiness (let us state it in Kantian terms). There cannot be, there must not be any undeserved happiness. And therefore⁹ the twofold legislation makes impossible any miracles. Yes?

Student: Why does a miracle need to be unwarranted happiness? I mean, could not a man have been so good as to merit a miracle?

LS: No, then he would get what he deserves; that would be a non-miraculous assignment of the happiness which he deserves after life.¹⁰ There are no exceptions to any rules: either they're the moral laws or the laws of distribution of happiness; and two, the natural. So this, I think, is the peculiar position of Kant compared, say, with Spinoza.

Now we will ask Mr. Schaefer to read something, unless there is anyone else who has a point regarding the things I just mentioned? Yes.

Student: One more question. Does this mean then that Kant says not only that miracles are unknowable, but that they are impossible?

LS: Yes, they are because—well, let me put it this way. Strictly speaking, he can only say, in the first place, they are unknowable. But the thing in itself is unknowable, hence miracles¹¹ are possible, ya? But here at this point there enters his moral theology. We have some access to the thing in itself, to the world in itself through our moral consciousness, which compels us to postulate the existence of God as a moral God, let us say. But then¹² God's morality would exclude the miracles. We cannot *know* this, but that

is the only assertion which we can make with any foundation: namely, the foundation in this case being our moral consciousness.¹³ Ya, now if there is no question regarding this point, then we ask Mr. Schaefer—ⁱⁱ

LS: Mr. Schaefer, that was a clear paper, but some points I think you misunderstood. What you said at the beginning: “The distinction of philosophy into logic, physics and ethics”; you said this is¹⁴ originated by Kant. That is not true. Kant himself says that it is an ancient distinction. It goes back to a Xenocrates, did you ever hear the name? A pupil of Plato; so it is very old. What Kant tries to do is only to give a rationale for it, we can say, a new rationale. That’s the first point.

Now when he speaks then in the sequel of metaphysics of morals and metaphysics of nature, what does metaphysics here mean?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, it means the things that we know *a priori*, that is, without regard to experience, about these two branches of knowledge.

LS: So metaphysics first no longer¹⁵ [has] here the meaning¹⁶ which it had in the past, the metaphysics which Kant claims to have destroyed.

Mr. Schaefer:¹⁷ But what he makes as the first science is something different from metaphysics: the critique of reason.

LS: Ya, the distinction which Kant himself makes is [between] transcendent metaphysics of the past (and which is impossible according to him), and *immanent* metaphysics, the metaphysics *within* the sphere of reason. And this is then divided into the two parts, metaphysics of nature and metaphysics of morals. But the foundation for both of that is supplied by the critique of reason, critique of theoretical and of practical reason.

Now, when you tried to give an account of Kant’s analysis of morality, you saw that this is very different from, say, the Aristotelian account, but I do not know whether you did not misrepresent Kant in this connection. When you spoke of what Kant says about temperament, yeah? Can you repeat what you said about it?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, I mentioned that the qualities of temperament are gifts of nature, which may be extremely bad. And¹⁸ I also said that these are the provisions, as he said, the provisions of a stepmotherly nature; and therefore, they appear not to be something for which a man is wholly responsible, since he sort of—

LS: Any way! He is not in any way responsible for it.¹⁹

Mr. Schaefer: Well, I said that this would seem to point to another reason for attributing moral character to the quality of the will alone, in that it is only this faculty for which man can be held responsible without regard to the work of nature. And therefore, only

ⁱⁱ Mr. Schaefer reads his paper; the reading was not recorded. The tape resumes with Strauss commenting on the paper.

this law can be universally binding on all men regardless of what kind of temperaments they were provided with by nature.

LS: Yes. And what, then, could be the difference between him and Aristotle? At least what you have in mind now. That for Aristotle, the gifts of nature to some and the withholding from others somehow forms part of our judgment of the man.

Mr. Schaefer: And also Aristotle seems to lay a greater possibility of the education and the formation²⁰ of what was given by nature, in order that the affections can be directed in a certain way by education. And that a man can be led—

LS: Ya,²¹ I can see that Kant, especially in the section which you have read, makes the impression of doing that, but this is not quite sufficient. But²² it's now a bit clearer to me what you meant than before.

Now²³ as to this key point which Kant makes and will make more fully in the sequel, the universality of the maxims: What does he mean by it? Take the example of lying.²⁴ I find it in a given situation more convenient to lie. And how do I find out that this is the wrong judgment, according to Kant?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, he says that the grounds of prudence must be clearly distinguished from those of morality, and that what I must ask is, whether it would be all right if other people, also finding excuses in particular circumstances, broke the law against lying.

LS: Ya, but in the first place, when Kant speaks of prudence he does not mean what Aristotle means by prudence or practical reason.

Mr. Schaefer: Yeah.

LS: He means only—

Mr. Schaefer: Means.

LS: Calculation, calculation.²⁵ It is wholly amoral, whereas in Aristotle prudence is essentially moral. Good. Ya, but I mentioned earlier in this course the doctrine of Rousseau regarding the general will, I have my particular will—I took the example: I don't wish to pay taxes. And how does this desire look when I try to give it the form of a law, a general law? And then it would mean: no one should pay any taxes. And then I see that my desire is irrational. I generalize my will. Now Kant makes this more radical. He doesn't speak of generalization but of universalization, because it is not merely the community to which I belong or of which I am a member, and²⁶ in the assembly of which I vote, but all rational beings. And it is not the particular will or the particularly willed object, but the maxim. Now what is a maxim?

Mr. Schaefer: A maxim,²⁷ as distinguished from a formal principle, is a law about some specific kind of practice like lying, which—

LS: A maxim is not a law in itself. A maxim is a general rule which I choose and on which I act. For example,²⁸ I make it my rule to live as conveniently as possible. That's my maxim. Men may live under that maxim. Maxim comes from the Latin *maxima*, namely, the first premise of a syllogism. Ya? The major, under which I subsume the minor premise, and then I get the conclusion. [So Kant implies whether we make it clear to ourselves or not, we all always act on maxims].²⁹ And these maxims may change, on which we act, but in the case of every maxim on which I act, I must make clear to myself, I must test it by universalizing it in the following manner: not only must I say that everyone else ought to act or shall act on this maxim, but everyone else is under the *law* to act under that presupposition. Then I must see whether this can still make sense. Now, how would it work in the case of lying? I mean I, in a given case, find lying convenient; and what do I do now?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, I have to consider whether, convenience aside,³⁰ it could be possibly a rational law for everyone to break his promise, to lie, and then I see that—

LS: How would this testing³¹ proceed?

Mr. Schaefer: Well, one imagines what would happen if everybody lied, and one sees that—

LS: Not everybody lied, but everybody is morally obliged to lie. Is such a world [LS taps on the table] possible?

Mr. Schaefer: He would say no, because if everyone were morally obliged to—

LS:³² In other words, everyone is always under a moral obligation to say the truth, or at least not to lie. That is the test. And this test by itself decides on whether my maxim is moral or not. Good.

Mr. Schaefer:³³ Is this fair to say, that a maxim is the grounds on which a person justifies his action? In other words—

LS: You can say that, ya. But³⁴ the point is that the maxim is as such not a law. But the maxim is that on which I act, or habitually act, or act in this particular case. And the maxim is to be tested by its ability to become a universal law. And therefore according to Kant we do not need any other consideration, any *experience*, but merely this test in order to know what is moral and what is not. Yes?

Student: Well, this case of lying, the universal law becomes “Everyone is under the obligation to lie”.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: The universal law in this case that we have to test, is it reasonable or possible to have a law that everyone is under the obligation to lie?

LS: Or at least is permitted to lie. All right.

Same Student: Well, but then how—

LS: Whenever he sees fit, ya.

Same Student:³⁵ How do we test this if not by experience? We have to say that, well, my judgment would be that³⁶ such a situation would be undesirable, and hence—

LS: No, Kant says more. It would be impossible.³⁷ We would contradict ourselves. Now let us see how Kant proceeds, because what we find in the first section is only prefatory to the more detailed discussion in the second section. So now let us then turn first to the Preface of the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Now Kant starts from the traditional distinction between logic, physics, and ethics, this post-Platonic distinction, yet Kant reinterprets it.³⁸ Mr. Reinken, you have that, ya? Let us read the first paragraph first.

Mr. Reinken:

Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: physics, ethics and logic. This division conforms perfectly to the nature of the subject, and one can improve on it perhaps only by supplying its principle in order both to insure its exhaustiveness and to define correctly the necessary subdivisions.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Yes, now this is what Kant and modern thinkers generally try to do, to be “systematic.” They try to deduce these—for example, this distinction from a higher principle, just as if you look at Aristotle’s *Ethics* you find there a number of virtues, and Aristotle does not indicate the principle underlying this division.

Modern man would—and not only modern man—would want to have a principle which makes it clear that there are these and these, and no other virtues. Now a little bit later, skip the next two paragraphs.

Mr. Reinken:

All philosophy, so far as it is based on experience, may be called empirical; but, so far as it presents its doctrines solely on the basis of *a priori* principles, it may be called pure philosophy.^{iv}

LS: You see here Kant uses here “philosophy” and “science” synonymously.³⁹ Yes.

Mr. Reinken: “The latter,” pure philosophy, “when merely formal, is logic; when limited to definite objects of understanding, it is metaphysics.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3.

^{iv} Ibid., 4.

In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics—a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals. Physics, therefore, will have an empirical and also a rational part—”^v

LS: “A rational part” being the metaphysics of nature. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: Metaphysics of nature.

and ethics likewise. In ethics, however, the empirical part may be called more specifically practical anthropology; the rational part, morals proper.^{vi}

LS: So practical anthropology,⁴⁰ at least a very important part of it, would be the art of how to influence men. How is it titled?

Mr. Reinken: “Win friends and influence people.”

LS: Yes, yes, yes. That is not morality, but practical anthropology in Kant’s sense. Good. So Kant tells us here the place of the metaphysics of morals⁴¹ with which he will deal here, compared with the other parts of philosophy, especially of pure philosophy. And now let us skip the next paragraph and read the following one.

Mr. Reinken:

Since my purpose here is directed to moral philosophy, I narrow the proposed question—^{vii}

LS: I.e., we can also say, “to the metaphysics of morals.” Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

Is it not of the utmost necessity to construct a pure moral philosophy which is completely freed from everything which may be only empirical and thus belong to anthropology?^{viii}

LS: Anthropology in the wide sense, where it would include what we now call psychology, sociology and what have you. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

That there must be such a philosophy is self-evident from the common idea of duty and moral laws.^{ix}

LS: Here, here. Very few people today would regard this as self-evident. So now,⁴² why is it so evident? Let us listen to the sequel.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid., 5.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

Everyone must admit that a law, if it is to hold morally, i.e. as a ground of obligation, must imply absolute necessity; he must admit that the command, "Thou shalt not lie," does not apply to men only, as if other rational beings had no need to observe it. The same is true for all other moral laws properly so called. He must concede that the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of man or in the circumstances in which he is placed, but sought *a priori* solely in the concepts of pure reason, and that every other precept which rests on principles of mere experience, even a precept which is in certain respects universal, so far as it leans in the least on empirical grounds (perhaps only in regard to the motive involved), may be called a practical rule but never a moral law.^x

LS: Why is it then so evident that there must be a pure moral philosophy without any empirical basis? The experience . . . upon which ethics could be based is of course experience of man, or men, of the nature of man. And⁴³ that the only experience of which one could . . . or if you add other animals, perhaps primates, that wouldn't change the situation a bit. Why is this insufficient? Why must⁴⁴ the fundamental part of morals at any rate be divorced from any consideration of the nature of man, from any empirical considerations?

Student: It seems that, you know,⁴⁵ the way in which he uses nature . . . would merely be what had occurred, what men had done before, so there wouldn't be a consistent basis for action because they see themselves in different ways—

LS: They seek?

Student: In Kant's view of the nature of man, when speaking empirically, you know, *out there*, he seems to be using nature as merely⁴⁶ what men do. So you have problems with relativism—

LS: He uses nature only as—?

Same Student: As what men do empirically.

LS: Ya, not only that. Kant goes beyond that, and here there is a reason . . .

Student:⁴⁷ Following Hume, he recommends that from induction you can never get even the slightest necessity. That is, necessity has to be something⁴⁸ which is the condition of intellection, rather—

LS: That is true. That is correct, but there is a more specific reason which he indicates here. Yes?

^x Ibid.

Student: That were we to imagine other rational beings who—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: aren't necessarily constructed with human nature but are rational they too would have to follow the laws. So that must be the premise and not—

LS:⁴⁹ And this is not merely a play of the imagination but the necessity to think of such possible beings. Now which is the most important case involved?

Same Student: God.

LS: God. In other words, if morality were essentially related to human nature, then there would be no reason why our notions of justice, for example, could in any way be applied to God. Yes?

Student: What makes it so evident that they should be? It would seem that—

LS: That there?

Same Student: That they should be. I mean, most cases—I would imagine certainly in, you know, in cases of the religions now present there is a notion of the unfathomableness of God's mercy and of His justice—

LS: Ya, but still, from Kant's point of view that is not bearable. And the enlightened part of his readers, meaning those who⁵⁰ were not believers in revealed religion but rather deists, they would have granted this without a question. Now the point is this: while Kant destroys (or claims to destroy) speculative or theoretical theology (metaphysics), the possibility of God's existence is for Kant essential, and we must never be . . . Therefore this is a necessary idea of reason, and therefore we have to consider this possibility of an amoral or transmoral God that must be present, and morality must be of such a character so as to include the application to God. And therefore, as Mr. Schaefer mentioned, the veracity of God demanded by Descartes in a famous passage⁵¹ is necessary. Yes.

God must *be* moral, in the sense in which we *ought* to be moral. That is to say, what we understand by God is that He is this *holy* being, and a holy being means a being which is *perfectly* just, perfectly moral . . . Of man we cannot say that. We have no reason to assume that any man is wholly, perfectly, just. But we know that we ought to be perfectly just. So in other words, the biblical notion that God's ways are not our ways, and our moral notions are in no way applicable to God⁵² in any specific point, that is . . . Yes.

Let us read the sequel, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Thus not only are moral laws together with their principles essentially different from all practical knowledge in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests solely on its pure part. Applied to man, it borrows nothing from knowledge of him (anthropology) but gives him, as a rational being, *a priori* laws. No doubt these laws require a power of judgment sharpened by experience, partly in order to decide in what cases they apply and partly to procure for them an access to man's will and an impetus to their practice. For man is affected by so many inclinations that, though he is capable of the idea of a practical pure reason, he is not so easily able to make it concretely effective in the conduct of his life.^{xi}

LS: So in other words, this is meant to be in passing. We still need the power of judgment in order to apply the moral laws properly. Now what does this mean? For example, I know that I ought not to lie under any circumstances, that I ought never to say anything which is not true. Of course, I must know the truth. I mean, if I say what is objectively a falsehood but believing it to be true, then I do not lie . . . This doesn't cause any difficulty as far as Kant is concerned. But there are other points. I gave you the example: if I say "Yours sincerely," and I am not yours sincerely at all, then I need some judgment in order to see, is it worthwhile to say "Yours insincerely." [Laughter] Or is it . . . things which are rightly disregarded. So we still need judgment. But the main point: the law itself is wholly independent⁵³ of any experience, and including human experience.

Yes. Now, yes. Next paragraph, please.

Mr. Reinken:

A metaphysics of morals is therefore indispensable, not merely because of motives to speculate on the source of the *a priori* practical principles which lie in our reason—^{xii}

LS: So in other words, not only because we as theoretical men wish to have a complete survey of all *a priori* knowledge which we possess, which is a legitimate concern for Kant, but this is not the sole reason and not the most important reason.

Mr. Reinken:

but also because morals themselves remain subject to all kinds of corruption so long as the guide and supreme norm for their correct estimation is lacking. For it is not sufficient to that which should be morally good that it conform to the law; it must be done for the sake of the law.^{xiii}

LS: Now let us stop here. This is a distinction which, if developed, means the distinction between *legality* and *morality*, and which is crucial for Kant. Now an action which is *legal* according to the moral law is not for this reason moral, because it may not have

^{xi} Ibid., 5-6.

^{xii} Ibid., 6.

^{xiii} Ibid.

been chosen for the sake of the moral law. For example, I may refrain from lying because I find it much too troublesome to lie again and again in order to support my first lie, you know?⁵⁴ I act legally, but I do not act morally because⁵⁵ I do not act for the *sake* of the law. Yes. And go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Otherwise the conformity is merely contingent and spurious, because, though the unmoral ground may indeed now and then produce lawful actions, more often it brings forth unlawful ones.^{xiv}

LS: In other words, this desire for convenience which induces me not to lie will also induce me to refrain from inconvenient duties. No? Is this not so? Therefore it is not a good reason, a good maxim. I follow my convenience above everything else.

Reinken:

But the moral law can be found in its purity and genuineness (which is the central concern in the practical) nowhere else than in a pure philosophy; therefore, this (i.e., metaphysics) must lead the way, and without it there can be no moral philosophy. Philosophy which mixes pure principles with empirical ones does not deserve the name, for what distinguishes philosophy from common rational knowledge is its treatment in separate sciences of what is confusedly comprehended in such knowledge. Much less does it deserve the name of moral philosophy, since by this confusion it spoils the purity of morals themselves and works contrary to its own end.^{xv}

LS: So in the sequel (we cannot read everything), Kant speaks here in the following paragraph of the “pure will” just as he speaks of “pure thinking.” Pure will is the will determined by the *a priori* moral law and pure thinking is *a priori* thinking. Yes. Let us then turn to the paragraph after that, the beginning.

Mr. Reinken: “That in general practical philosophy—”

LS: No, “In the intention to publish in the future—”

Mr. Reinken:

As a preliminary to a metaphysics of morals which I intend some day to publish, I issue these *Foundations*. There is, to be sure, no other foundation for such a metaphysics than a critical examination of a pure practical reason, just as there is no other foundation for metaphysics than the already published critical examination of the pure speculative reason.^{xvi}

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid., 7.

LS: The latter is of course the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant later on changed this title, so this book here, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, is⁵⁶ a provisional statement, the full statement of which would be a critique of pure practical reason as he calls it. But a critique of pure practical reason, Kant says here, is not so terribly important. So Kant does not promise that he will write a critique of pure practical reason. He did try to publish it a few years later, but this is where he changed his mind; and so the plan would be a critique of pure reason, i.e., pure speculative reason, followed by a work on the metaphysics of nature which Kant published. Then *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, followed later by a metaphysics of morals, which he also wrote and published. Kant changed his mind as to the necessity of a much more extensive *foundational* consideration and wrote therefore later, after this work, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Yes?

Student: Well, you described this as provisional.⁵⁷ I think⁵⁸ at the end of the *Critique* he suggests that on the basis of what has been laid down there, he can be confident that the principles from which he derives from the *Critique* in both morals and physics, are things which he can be confident of. I mean, must we really say that these are provisional in the sense that he would not have the same confidence about them that he had about the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

LS: No, no, no. I see,⁵⁹ I must have expressed myself wrongly.⁶⁰ I correct it now to make it more clear. What Kant seems to say is this: [LS writes on the blackboard] *The Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* to the metaphysics of morals is equal to *The Critique of Pure Reason* to the metaphysics of nature . . . But later on he changed his mind and replaced this, as it were, by *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Is this clear?

Same Student: Yeah, no, but what I'm asking is—

LS: I'm sorry.

Same Student: He seems to imply in *The Critique of Pure Reason* that even without a separate critique of pure practical reason he has shown enough—

LS: Ya.

Same Student: that he had derived⁶¹ the principles stated here not merely provisionally, but with confidence. In other words,⁶² [it] seems to me [that] there is a certain overlap between *The Critique of Pure Reason* and—

LS: Ya, but⁶³ if we look at the finished works, one can say the procedure in this book is analytical, ascending from ordinary moral understanding to metaphysics. And the essence of *The Critique of Practical Reason*⁶⁴ is synthetic, as Kant calls it, meaning deduct starting from the principles and deduce it from them. And there are quite a few things which have been changed and improved in the later work. We of course limit ourselves entirely to this first stage. Good.

Now then let us turn to the first section. And Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a *good will*.^{xvii}

LS: Now let us stop here. “Good will” is more than underlined [laughter]—ya, in capital letters: the Good Will.⁶⁵ How would we translate this into Aristotle or, for that matter, into Plato?

Student:⁶⁶ The motives of the virtuous man.

LS: What corresponds to will in Aristotle?

Student: In a way that’s the second part, the second part of the soul, that part which is, I can’t think of the word—

Student: Appetitive?

Student: Pardon? Yes, no, no, no, not appetitive.

LS: What else?

Reinken: Deliberation.

Same Student: The *thymos*. The spirited part.

LS: But what has the *thymos* to do with the will? *Thymos* is the irascible part of the soul. And why should the will be⁶⁷ irascible and not also . . .

Same Student: Well, doesn’t Aristotle say at the beginning of the *Ethics* that if the irascible part can be conjoined to the rational part of the soul, it can master the appetites in the same way that Kant says that practical reason united with the will—

LS: Ya,⁶⁸ I think this will work.⁶⁹ Aristotle has . . . would be *proairesis*. Choice, ya? Choice.⁷⁰ Part of virtue is the virtue of preferring, of choosing. *Arête* or *airetike*.⁷¹

It is very hard to say what would precisely correspond to will in Plato and Aristotle, but I read you two passages which⁷² show you the importance of this notion in pre-Kantian literature. The first is from Augustine’s *City of God*, book 14, chapter 7: “The man whose intention it is, whose firm resolve it is, to love God and to love the neighbor not according to man, but according to God, as he loves also himself.⁷³ This man is without any question, because of this love, said to be a man of good will.” The man of good will is the man who loves God with all his heart and loves his neighbor like himself.⁷⁴

^{xvii} Ibid., 9.

Augustine makes it perfectly clear what he understands by “a man of good will.” By Kant, this content is completely absent.

Now I will read you a passage from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 3, chapter 116:

Man is said to be good with a view to the fact that he has a good will [i.e. not with a view to the fact that he has a good digestion . . . —LS] a good will by which he actualizes whatever good is in him. A will, however, is good because of the fact that it wills *the* good and especially the *greatest* good which is the end. The more this man wills this good, the more this man is good. What man wills to a higher degree, that what he wills out of love than what he wills out of fear. For what he wills only out of fear, that is said to be mixed with the involuntary. [That is a reference to Aristotle. So like, for example, someone who throws his merchandise into the sea out of fear; I mean, in order to save his life, he doesn't like to throw it away, it is a necessary evil—LS] Hence the love of the highest good, that is to say, of God, makes man good to the highest degree.

So that is fundamental, the same as what Augustine means. And here we see the great difference from Kant, because Kant's good will does not have this reference to love of God or love of the neighbor.

Now let us turn to that famous page in Aristotle to see the difference between him and Kant. And I read to you only one passage, at the beginning of the *Eudemian Ethics*, which is less well known.⁷⁵ Now I just read to you the beginning of the English translation:

The man who at Delos set forth in the precinct of the god, his own opinion composed an inscription for the forecourt of the temple of Leto in which he distinguished the good, the noble, and the pleasant. His verses are: “Justice is the most noble” [or the fairest—LS]. “Best is health. But to win whatever one desires is the pleasantest.”^{xviii}

In other words, the noble, the good, and the pleasant are three entirely different considerations. What is most pleasant is something radically different from what is best and also from what is fairest. “But we do not allow that he,” that man who makes this point, “is right. For happiness is at once the fairest and the best and the most pleasant.”

Therefore, the man of good will, if we would apply this word choice, the man who *chooses* best would be the one who would choose that which is at the same time the most resplendent (fairest), the best, and the most pleasant. And that is happiness.

Now what does Kant do with the Aristotelian assertion, which is fundamentally in agreement with the [*Nicomachean*] *Ethics*, of course?⁷⁶ Now what does Kant do with that? Now, if we try to restate Kant's assertion in the terms of Aristotle, one would say

^{xviii} Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1214a.

[that] *only* the noble has to be considered, and the noble as noble does not in any way imply the good and the pleasant. And while the good and the pleasant are of course attractive to us by nature, they are of no interest as far as our true worth is concerned, our true worth consisting only in our morality, i.e., of choosing the noble as noble. But here I have already⁷⁷ retranslated, as it were, Kant into the language of Aristotle and whether something important⁷⁸ of Kant has not been lost in that translation, we must see. Good.

And now Kant gives here a survey of the various things which are not unqualifiedly good. Now which are they? Now, read perhaps the beginning, we cannot read the . . .

Mr. Reinken:

Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resoluteness and perseverance as qualities of temperament, are doubtless in many respects good and desirable. But they can become extremely bad and harmful if the will, which is to make use of these gifts of nature and which in its special constitution is called character, is not good.^{xix}

LS: Does this make sense? Good. And now he shows us of other things. For example, the gifts of fortune, that they are not unqualifiedly good,⁷⁹ for example, power, wealth, and honor, even health, because they are all things which can be *misused*. The only thing which cannot be *misused* is a good will. Does it make sense that everything else can be misused? For example, science can be misused, philosophy can be misused, but there must be something which cannot possibly be misused. That is, again, not the language of Kant, but the language of Socrates or Plato. But we must ultimately arrive at something which cannot be misused.

Remember the *Gorgias* at the beginning. Gorgias is a teacher of rhetoric, and there are people who say it is not wise to take lessons in rhetoric because then you or your son will become a shyster or some other form of a crook. And then Gorgias says, with the proper indignation which every man would have in such a situation, "No, that may happen, but there is no necessity for it, just as a boxing teacher is not responsible if one of his pupils uses boxing for boxing his own father. [Laughter] I only teach him to box."⁸⁰ And I even warn him to box only legally, but what can I do?" [Laughter]⁸¹ So doesn't Plato imply then [that] the art of boxing, or for that matter of rhetoric, is therefore in need of a higher art which controls these lower arts and gives them guidance? Now Kant has no place for such arts. The place of them is taken by the good will.⁸² I hope you keep this in mind, this sentence which was just read to you. Read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Some qualities seem to be conducive to this good will and can facilitate its action, but, in spite of that, they have no intrinsic unconditional worth. They rather presuppose a good will, which limits the high esteem which one otherwise rightly has for them and prevents their being held to be absolutely good. Moderation in emotions and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation not only are good in many respects but even seem to

^{xix} Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 9.

constitute a part of the inner worth of the person. But however unconditionally they were esteemed by the ancients, they are far from being good without qualification.^{xx}

LS: Again, here we hear Kant's explicit criticism of the ancients. The ancients unqualifiedly praised these character traits, and Kant says they do not deserve unqualified praise because they are in need of the good will—which means, in other words, the ancients were not sufficiently attentive to the good will. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

For without the principle of a good will they can become extremely bad—^{xxi}

LS: Ya, “evil” [is a] much better translation.

Mr. Reinken: “evil.”

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

and the coolness of a villain makes him not only far more dangerous but also more directly abominable in our eyes than he would have seemed without it.^{xxii}

LS: Yes. Now what does this mean? And especially this critique of the ancients. What would Aristotle say, or for that matter Plato, if they were called to question on this ground on which Kant does call them into question? What would he say?

Student: That a moderate villain is a contradiction in terms—

LS: Yes, because what?

Same Student: The moderate man doesn't choose villainous objects.

LS: In other words, Kant uses “moderation” in a very new sense, meaning a fellow who has the greatest self-control regarding, say, food, drink and so on⁸³ in order to be able to execute a robbery at 3 o'clock on a very cold day [laughter] where there is no food and drink, and he mustn't drink because then he would not have the sobriety required, ya? Good.

Student:⁸⁴ But courage seems to be less conjoined to that kind of necessity, I mean, it's not—

LS: Courage was mentioned—

^{xx} Ibid., 10.

^{xxi} Ibid.

^{xxii} Ibid.

Same Student: It's not courageous—

LS: Courage was mentioned before.

Same Student: Yeah, no I see, isn't a courageous criminal possible in Aristotle's terms?

LS: No. Why not? I mean, dogmatically, without going into the thesis? Because the virtues are inseparable.

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: Ya? What that means is another matter. This is surely—[students chuckle]

Same Student: But⁸⁵ in the sense in which they are inseparable that is the highest form of courage.

LS: No,⁸⁶ *only* then would it be courage. Otherwise it is a kind of sham courage, I mean, very well concealed, maybe [students chuckle], but not genuine courage.

So in other words, Kant arrives at his assertion that *only* the good will [is unqualifiedly good] by not understanding the virtues in the classical sense. He may have very good reasons for that, but they are not yet apparent. But when Kant⁸⁷ says of the virtues that they are not choiceworthy for their own sake but all [are] subject to the good will, does he mention all the virtues,⁸⁸ or at least all the most interesting and important virtues?⁸⁹ Or is there any virtue which he fails to mention?

Student: *Sophia*.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Wisdom.

LS: Well, but he has mentioned it in a way, reason and . . . the theoretical reason.

Student: Justice.

LS: Justice.

Student: Ahh.

LS: That is very interesting. Of justice Kant does not say that it may be misused, because what we mean exactly by justice⁹⁰ is that which would regulate all arts and other human pursuits. And so we can tentatively say the good will replaces justice in particular, or is most closely akin to justice.

Now what is justice?⁹¹ I mean, nothing farfetched and recondite, but what is justice, according to the most obvious view stated by Aristotle in the fifth book [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*], when he speaks of justice in the most general meaning of the term?

Student: It means rightness as a whole. Practicing a right way of living.

LS: Ya, but . . . more specific.

Student: Giving equal shares to equals?

LS: No, that is special justice, not justice in general.

Student: Giving everyone his due?

LS: That is also such special justice. Obedience to the law. Of course the law must be a decent law. This of course⁹² leads to a long story. But still, this primary and simple meaning that a just man is a lawabiding man⁹³ can never be completely forgotten.

Now what does Kant do when he speaks of the good will? He will make clear very soon that the good will consists in obedience to the law—of course, not to the law of the land but to the moral law. But still the law—so close is here the connection.⁹⁴ The good will takes the place of justice.

And I remind you here of a statement of Kant, an early statement, long before he wrote his famous book when he said that Rousseau has brought him into right shape, and that the conceited or imaginary superiority of the theoretical man disappears. And then when he speaks of what takes its place, of the philosophic pursuits which take the place of pure theory, he speaks there of the right of man, mankind, the right of humanity, which⁹⁵ would belong to the virtue of justice and right. So⁹⁶ that is not an accident that Kant fails to mention justice.

I would like to read to you a passage (there are many more, but for some reason I have this here) [from] Rousseau's letter to d'Alembert on the theater.^{xxiii} He speaks there of the possibility that a man like Cicero would be a worthy subject of the theater because of his decency, nobility, morality. But⁹⁷ on the other hand the dramatic poet should not boost such a fellow like Catalina, a scoundrel of the first magnitude.⁹⁸

Granted that such a criminal like Catalina has a strong soul [renowned for *âme forte*—LS] but⁹⁹ will he not the less be a detestable criminal, and should one give to the deeds of a robber the colors of the deeds of a hero? What is then the end of the morality of such a play if it is not to encourage the Catalinas, and to give to clever scoundrels the price of public esteem that belongs rightfully only to good men? But such is the taste that one must flatter on the theatre. Such are the manners of a learned or intellectual century. Knowledge, vigor, spirit, courage

^{xxiii} Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 10, trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom and Chris Kelly (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press), 251-352.

alone have our admiration. And thou, sweet and modest virtue, thou remains always without honors.

He made a similar distinction: knowledge, wit, courage (we can also add the other qualities mentioned by Kant) opposed to virtue. Virtue is something . . . Kant radicalizes that by not speaking of virtue here but of the core of virtue which is the good will. Yes. Now let us turn to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes or because of its adequacy to achieve some proposed end—^{xxiv}

LS: Any, any proposed end.

Mr. Reinken:

any proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself. And, regarded for itself, it is to be esteemed incomparably higher than anything which could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination or even of the sum total of all inclinations.^{xxv}

LS: Ya, all right, and now the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

But there is something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of the will alone,¹⁰⁰ in which no account is taken of any use, that, notwithstanding the agreement even of common sense, the suspicion must arise that perhaps only high-flown fancy is its hidden basis, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature and its appointment of reason as the ruler of our will. We shall therefore examine this idea from this point of view.^{xxvi}

LS: Yes. So in other words, Kant grants that this assertion which he has made may sound fantastical to quite a few readers, and he will dispose of this doubt.¹⁰¹ In other words, he will prove¹⁰² what he said about the good will being the only unqualifiedly good thing. He will prove that. And what is the character of the proof, Mr. Schaefer? You spoke of it, but I wish you should repeat it now.¹⁰³ The first proof.

Mr. Schaefer:¹⁰⁴ Well, the proof is based on the assumption that nature has given every body organs which are each best fitted for their respective purposes. And if we see that we have a practical reason, a reason which can influence the will, and yet it doesn't produce happiness as well as mere instinct would, that it must be that reason was designed to influence the will for some other purpose, and—

^{xxiv} Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 10.

^{xxv} Ibid.

^{xxvi} Ibid., 10-11.

LS: So in other words, Kant argues here on the basis of the teleology of nature. But what is the status of the teleology of nature according to Kant?¹⁰⁵ The teleology of nature is of course a theoretical pursuit, isn't it?

Mr. Schaefer: Yeah, this is not something which we can know.

LS: So in other words, Kant argues here popularly. Most of his readers would have granted that there is a wisdom of nature, and we must understand nature as operating for some good end. And that is in not in any way a final demonstration of Kant's point of view, it only prepares it. And it is a preparatory argument and, as you stated, it is based on Rousseau to some extent.

Mr. Schaefer: Is this¹⁰⁶ any more popular than the very fact that his system requires the end: God and a—

LS: Ya, but then a proper foundation has been laid for that. That is a different story. And it is very important that the absoluteness of the good will, if we can use that term, is to be established independently of any belief in the existence of God.

Now Kant proceeds then in this way in the following pages: he says that there is only one . . . alternative for which man could have been destined by nature apart from morality and that is happiness. Now look at men in general, including everyone himself. Do we need reason for making ourselves happy? Is reason in any way sufficient for making us happy? If happiness were the end of nature, she would have given us *instinct* as guides, as it has given it to brutes, and not reason, which¹⁰⁷ forces us to choose and therefore to make all kinds of mistakes, unavoidable mistakes given the complexity of human situations. So happiness cannot be the end of man and meant by nature. And there is only one alternative: that reason has been given to men for the use of reason, regardless of happiness. That the highest use of reason is moral reason. And therefore this is the end intended by nature.

Let us read the paragraph, that is skip two paragraphs and then read the one, who makes it a bit more clear than I have done it. "For since reason is not fit, not sufficiently fit."

Mr. Reinken:

is not, however, competent to guide the will safely with regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs (which in part it, reason, multiplies)^{xxvii} and to this end an innate instinct would have led with far more certainty. But reason is given to us as a practical faculty, i.e., one which is meant to have an influence on the will. As nature has elsewhere distributed capacities suitable to the functions they are to perform, reason's proper function must be to produce a will good in itself and not one good merely as a means, for to the former reason is absolutely essential. This will must indeed not be the sole and complete—^{xxviii}

^{xxvii} In original: "(which it in part multiplies)"

^{xxviii} Ibid., 12.

LS: In other words, here could be no question of substituting *instinct* as preferable to reason because instinct would never be capable of producing morality, moral goodness. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[but not] the sole and complete good but the highest good and the condition of all others, even of the desire for happiness. In this case it is entirely compatible with the wisdom of nature that the cultivation of reason, which is required for the former unconditional purpose, at least in this life restricts in many ways—indeed can reduce to less than nothing—the achievement of the latter conditional purpose, happiness. For one perceives that nature here does not proceed unsuitably to its purpose, because reason, which recognizes its highest practical vocation in the establishment of a good will, is capable only of a contentment of its own kind, i.e., one that springs from the attainment of a purpose which is determined by reason, even though this injures the ends of inclination.

We have, then, to develop the concept of a will which—^{xxix}

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. Let us stop. So in other words, reason, practical reason does lead to a contentedness of its own kind, to a *happiness* of its own kind which must not be mistaken for happiness in the ordinary sense. Here Kant for a moment comes very close to the older view. We must see how, and how deep, this leads.

Now, but this is only a provisional argument, as I said, in order to prepare, to familiarize the reader who at that time believed in the wisdom of nature that precisely on this generally accepted basis, the view that man has been created for his happiness in this life is incompatible with the belief in teleology. Well, of course today, in a very much changed situation, most people would grant that, and they draw the conclusion that if men want to be happy on earth, they have to take care of it themselves. Nature won't do it. On the contrary, by in a way by resisting nature, rebelling against nature,¹⁰⁸ liberating oneself from the power of nature, this is the way to happiness.

And¹⁰⁹ here at this point the decisive argument begins, and at this point we must stop today. So next time we will complete our reading of the first part of the *Foundations of Morals*.¹¹⁰

¹ Deleted “are...”

² Deleted “first...”

³ Deleted “this...”

⁴ Deleted “an...”

⁵ Changed from “Now...so this is a very...the proof of the impossibility of miracles is...rests on very questionable foundations.”

⁶ Deleted “And with this openness that...”

⁷ Deleted “But this...”

⁸ Deleted "it...."

⁹ Deleted "in other words, there is...."

¹⁰ Deleted "There would be...there would be no...there...there...."

¹¹ Deleted "are not...."

¹² Deleted "this...His...."

¹³ Deleted "Could you open the window a bit? It's very hot, I think. Or could I...I could perhaps—"

Student: [Inaudible word] put the chair [inaudible words]."

¹⁴ Deleted "made...."

¹⁵ Deleted "have."

¹⁶ Deleted "of...."

¹⁷ Deleted "But...but he...."

¹⁸ Deleted "they're...and I...oh."

¹⁹ Deleted "Yes and...what is it, I mean...and go—"

²⁰ Deleted "of the natural...."

²¹ Deleted "that cannot...."

²² Deleted "it is...I see now...."

²³ Deleted "and...."

²⁴ Deleted "**Mr. Schaefer:** He...well he—"

²⁵ Deleted "Without...."

²⁶ Deleted "where...."

²⁷ Deleted "is a...."

²⁸ Deleted "I would like...."

²⁹ Changed from "So we all...Kant implies, we all have such...we act, whether we make it clear to ourselves or not, we always act on maxims."

³⁰ Deleted "it would be...."

³¹ Deleted "go...."

³² Deleted "Everyone is...."

³³ Deleted "Is it...what I said in my paper...."

³⁴ Deleted "it...."

³⁵ Deleted "How do we...."

³⁶ Deleted "such a...."

³⁷ Deleted "It would be...."

³⁸ Deleted "Now, what...how does he, Mrs. [inaudible word], let us turn."

³⁹ Deleted "And he...."

⁴⁰ Deleted "that would be...."

⁴¹ Deleted "of which he...."

⁴² Deleted "how...."

⁴³ Deleted "this...."

⁴⁴ Deleted "morals be...."

⁴⁵ Deleted "just...when...."

⁴⁶ Deleted "you know"

⁴⁷ Deleted "As Hume...."

⁴⁸ Deleted "which...which is not...."

⁴⁹ Deleted "So...."

⁵⁰ Deleted "were not simply...."

⁵¹ Deleted "must be...."

⁵² Deleted "in any, I mean...."

⁵³ Deleted "of any empirical...."

⁵⁴ Deleted "This is then...."

⁵⁵ Deleted "I am not...."

⁵⁶ Deleted "a provisional statement, which...."

⁵⁷ Deleted "In...."

⁵⁸ Deleted "in the...."

⁵⁹ Deleted "I must have...I must express my...."

⁶⁰ Deleted "It is...."

-
- ⁶¹ Deleted “the principles not merely....”
⁶² Deleted “the...there.”
⁶³ Deleted “from....”
⁶⁴ Deleted “it.”
⁶⁵ Deleted “Now this is....”
⁶⁶ Deleted “The....”
⁶⁷ Deleted “as....”
⁶⁸ Deleted “that....”
⁶⁹ Deleted “The....”
⁷⁰ Deleted “Virtue is....”
⁷¹ Deleted “There is no....”
⁷² Deleted “show how....”
⁷³ Deleted “He....”
⁷⁴ Deleted “Here this...there is...here it is....”
⁷⁵ Deleted “[inaudible words]. **LS:** Thank you. *Eudemian*. Good.”
⁷⁶ Deleted “with the *Nicomachean Ethics*.”
⁷⁷ Deleted “translated....”
⁷⁸ Deleted “has....”
⁷⁹ Deleted “Which I believe....”
⁸⁰ Deleted “But he must then...he...he....”
⁸¹ Deleted “And...now, and.”
⁸² Deleted “So now we have seen....”
⁸³ Deleted “and....”
⁸⁴ Deleted “But....”
⁸⁵ Deleted “I mean...but that would be...but that would....”
⁸⁶ Deleted “then he....”
⁸⁷ Deleted “speaks here of the virtues, among other things which are not...and the...the...and.”
⁸⁸ Deleted “I mean....”
⁸⁹ Deleted “Which....”
⁹⁰ Deleted “that....”
⁹¹ Deleted “What is....”
⁹² Deleted “is....”
⁹³ Deleted “is....”
⁹⁴ Deleted “Justice, we can say...the...the....”
⁹⁵ Deleted “is of course....”
⁹⁶ Deleted “justice....”
⁹⁷ Deleted “one should.”
⁹⁸ Deleted “And this....”
⁹⁹ Deleted “he will not the less be....”
¹⁰⁰ Deleted “**LS:** Of, yeah, more.”
¹⁰¹ Deleted “And he gives....”
¹⁰² Deleted “that”
¹⁰³ Deleted “**Mr. Schaefer:** Well...well—”
¹⁰⁴ Deleted “The proof is based....”
¹⁰⁵ Deleted “Kant....”
¹⁰⁶ Deleted “any less....”
¹⁰⁷ Deleted “makes us....”
¹⁰⁸ Deleted “is....”
¹⁰⁹ Deleted “the....”
¹¹⁰ Deleted “and then Mr....Miss Perkins, will read your paper not at the beginning, but somewhere in the middle, maybe toward the end.”

Session 6: April 20, 1967

Leo Strauss: So before we turn to the text of Kant¹ and afterward to Miss Perkins's paper, I would like to indicate in an easily intelligible way what Kant's moral and political philosophy is about. I'm taking as examples phenomena² with which you all are familiar. The key point which Kant makes, and which no one prior to Kant has made in the same way, is this: that moral philosophy or ethics must not be based on experience. The same applies to the principles of political philosophy. It must not be based on any consideration of the human nature, at least in its fundamental parts. Now this sounds very strange and yet it affects all our lives today, especially in the Western countries. What does it mean? In the first place, experience is of no benefit, ultimately. It means that the past cannot tell us anything as to what can be done, should be done in the future, or what is possible in the future.³ If there are *a priori* principles of morals and politics, the possibility of acting in accordance with that morals and politics is guaranteed by the *a priori* law itself. Thou canst for thou oughtst. There is no need for an additional proof of the possibility.

Compare this with Plato or Aristotle. They describe or figure out a best social order and they are compelled according to their principles to prove the *possibility* of this best order by referring to the nature of man. For Kant that is not necessary. We will find specimens when we come to his more detailed writings . . .

Now, but if you ask people who are not Kantians and who consider possibilities of human living together which have no basis in past experience,⁴ well, they would say that ultimately our basis *is* experience. For example, say psychology, let us assume, teaches us something on the conditions under which aggressiveness emerges in individuals or groups, and on the basis of this empirical knowledge we can plan a society without any aggressiveness. And so our project is based on experience and not on any *a priori* considerations. But there is only this difficulty: this, letting me take this simple example, say, a society free from aggressiveness, has of course never been actual—that is admitted—and therefore we cannot possibly foresee what bad side effects this apparently very desirable goal might have. And⁵ the only way to guarantee the feasibility and the moral necessity is the way in which Kant is trying to do that. Whether the Kantian way is a good way is, of course, an open question, but it has at least this great advantage compared with other modern competitors in this respect. So this much about that. And⁶ since I trust that this will arouse some interest in certain quarters which otherwise would not be interested in Kant.

Now we have begun to study the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and what Kant said there, especially in the first section, right at the beginning, about the good will, which is (as one might say) the core of morality. Now at least a bit more precisely: that in human actions which alone can make these actions morally good. We are not morally good if we do the right things for the wrong reasons, for example, out of the calculation of our advantages or in order to improve our image. We must do the right thing because it is right and for no other reason. We must choose *to kalon*, in Latin *honestum*, the decent or noble, because it is decent or noble and for no other reason.

Now Kant is concerned with isolating this core of morality because he is concerned with the purity of morality, with distinguishing morality itself from the morally indifferent ingredients of our actions.⁷ First of all, let us look at Kant⁸ at the beginning, in the first section, third paragraph. Here, all right, read this.

Mr. Reinken:

The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes or because of its adequacy to achieve anyⁱ proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself. And, regarded for itself, it is to be esteemed incomparably higher than anything which could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination or even of the sum total of all inclinations.

LS: I.e., happiness.

Mr. Reinken:

Even if it should happen that, by a particularly unfortunate fate or by the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should be wholly lacking in power to accomplish its purpose—ⁱⁱ

LS: Now this is a key point, now listen. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

and if even the greatest effort should not avail it to achieve anything of its end, and if there remained only the good will (not as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in our power), it would sparkle like a jewel in its own right, as something that had its full worth in itself. Usefulness or fruitlessness can neither diminish nor augment this worth. Its usefulness would be only its setting, as it were, so as to enable us to handle it more conveniently in commerce or to attract the attention of those who are not yet connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to those who are experts or to determine its worth.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Ya, this point—now let us compare this with a passage towards the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170A23 following. Aristotle speaks here of the two lives: the practical or political, and the theoretical life. And he says here⁹ the theoretical life is the higher. And one reason why it is higher is because it needs much less of external equipment than the practical life. As far as the necessary things are concerned, say, the minimum of food, both the theoretical man and the practical man need it equally, although the political man has more to toil with his body. But this wouldn't make a great difference. But it makes a very great difference as far as the actions are concerned, for the liberal man needs money in order to do the liberal actions, and the just man needs money

ⁱ In original: "some"

ⁱⁱ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 10.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

in order to return what he owes. For the intentions—the wills, we could say—are *immanifest*. And also the unjust people pretend that they will to act justly. The key point is the wills are immanifest. What is manifest are only the *deeds*, and in order to *do* these deeds you must have all kinds of means: you must have a healthy body, and also money, of course. But the courageous man, for example, needs power, and the moderate man needs opportunities and temptations, for how otherwise could you know that he is moral? And so on.¹⁰ And Aristotle concludes therefore [that] because the moral man in the fullest sense, and that would be the man who acts politically on a large scale, is therefore inferior—because of his dependence on these external things—to the theoretical man. Now it is usual to (and not unjust, not misleading) to call Aristotle's morality a gentleman's morality. Kant implicitly rejects the¹¹ gentleman morality.¹² What Kant does, is in a way, to grant to Aristotle what he says: Yes, if morality depends so much on external goods, then it is a very questionable thing. But he does not of course face (here, at least) the Aristotelian assertion that the mere wills remain immanifest. He faces it in another way. He says that wills will always be immanifest because even the most honest man can never be sure that he acted out of morality and not for . . . so therefore this argument of Aristotle is not important for him.

Let me now pursue another line. Kant, in contradistinction to Aristotle, is concerned with the morality of which every human being is capable: rich or poor, healthy or sick, handsome or ugly. The defect of the gentleman morality led Aristotle to transcend the gentleman morality in the direction of the contemplative life. But the contemplative life is the preserve of a small minority of people who have special natural gifts. Kant seeks true worth, the worth of man in something of which *every* human being is capable. To repeat the phrase from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “the multitude of the vulgar which for us is most respected,”^{iv} of which every human being is capable regardless of whether he is intelligent or stupid. We can therefore say, as has often been said, that Kant's moral teaching is *democratic*, which doesn't mean that Kant is politically a democrat.¹³ That is only¹⁴ true in a qualified sense. In the most important respect all men are equal.

Now let us contrast this with the equality teaching prior to Kant, especially that of men like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. They all also say [that] all men are by nature equal in the most important respect, and they mean by it that all men are equal regarding the fundamental desire for self-preservation. All men are equally recoiling from death. And they¹⁵ drew the further conclusion that since men are equal in this respect, they have also equally each of them the right to the means of self-preservation and, which is even more important, everyone is equally the judge of the means of self-preservation. And Rousseau, in a way the most radical of the three, draws this conclusion: that therefore everyone must *remain* the judge of the means of his self-preservation even when he has entered civil society—and that means he must be a member of the legislative body. In other words, direct democracy.¹⁶ The distinction between the permitted or unpermitted means of self-preservation is identical with the law.

Now this view of the famous predecessors of Kant leads to the consequence that we must respect everyone's concern with his self-preservation, and hence his legal rights. But the

^{iv} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxxiii.

ultimate ground of this respect (of the fact that we must respect it) is my concern with my self-preservation, i.e., an amoral fact. That's amoral because we can't help but being concerned with our self-preservation. Another sign of the same thing is: one cannot respect a man because he is concerned with his self-preservation. We don't despise him for it, but we do not look up to him on this account.¹⁷ We cannot respect him even for his lawful concern with his self-preservation, for this may be due to his calculation. He does not do it necessarily because it is right. That's what decides it.

Granted that self-preservation is the most important respect, Kant's fine with that. It is most important in the sense that it is most urgent, because we cannot do anything else unless we are alive. Under no circumstances is it the highest respect, and as is shown by the fact that we do not look up to people merely because they are alive or merely because they preserve their lives. And here is where Kant comes in. Kant builds the equality of man on the *highest* respect. The highest is the good will, and of this good will every man as man is capable. This much as a reminder.

Now we have then discussed last time the preliminary consideration of Kant at the beginning,¹⁸ which is based on the teleology of nature, we have seen. Nature cannot have¹⁹ intended man's happiness, because this would have been guaranteed much better by instinct. And therefore the only alternative as matters stand is that nature has intended man for morality or the good will.

Now then Kant goes on to give an analysis of the good will. And the point which he makes first is that a good will is a will determined only by duty, that is to say by obedience to the moral law. The alternative to duty is inclination; in German *Neigung*, but²⁰ I do not know whether "inclination" is the best translation. In French I would say *penchant* and not *inclinaison*. But Kant also means what was traditionally called natural inclinations—natural inclinations, like the inclination towards the preservation of life.²¹ Well, an English equivalent probably would be "bent." Anything to which we—

Student: "Leanings?"

LS: Or "leaning," yes. Ya, "leaning" would even be better, ya. But in a wide sense²² the natural inclinations proper would be included. Now let me see. This is the first point which Kant makes. The good will is determined only by duty. And the second point: an action from duty has its moral worth only in the *maxim* according to which it is chosen, not in the intended effect or the purpose.

And then the third point which he draws is then—do you have that in your translation? A little bit later. "The third proposition as a conclusion from the first two preceding ones, I would."²³

Mr. Reinken: "The third principle, as a consequence of the two preceding, I would express—"^v

^v Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 16.

LS: Proposition, not principle.

Mr. Reinken:

proposition, as a consequence of the two preceding, I would express as follows: Duty is the necessity of an action executed from respect for law. I can certainly have a leaning to the object as an effect of the proposed action, but I can never have respect for it precisely because it is a mere effect and not an activity of a will. Similarly, I can have no respect for any leaning whatsoever, whether my own or that of another; in the former case I can at most approve of it and in the latter I can even love it, i.e., see it as favorable to my own advantage. But that which is connected with my will merely as ground and not as consequence, that which does not serve my leaning but overpowers it or at least excludes it from being considered in making a choice—in a word, law itself—can be an object of respect and thus a command. Now as an act from duty wholly excludes the influence of leanings and therewith every object of the will, nothing remains which can determine the will objectively except the law, and nothing subjectively except pure respect for this practical law. This subjective element is the maxim that I ought to follow such a law even if it thwarts all my leanings.^{vi}

LS: Yes, in a note here Kant calls “respect” a feeling which is wrought by ourselves, meaning not wrought by any other thing, say, like a feeling of attraction which some cookie might have [laughter] or whatever else you take. Good. Now this, therefore, the feeling *sui generis*, it is respect, we can say, is the proper response to the moral law. But there is one point which²⁴ has not become clear [and] will be stated. Well, let us read this note.

Mr. Reinken: “A maxim is the subjective—”

LS: No no, the next one.

Mr. Reinken:

It might be objected that I seek to take refuge in an obscure feeling behind the word “respect,” instead of clearly resolving the question with a concept of reason. But though respect is a feeling, it is not one received through any influence but is self-wrought by a rational concept; thus it differs specifically from all feelings of the former kind which may be referred to inclination or fear. What I recognize directly as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which means merely the consciousness of the submission of my will to a law without the intervention of other influences on my mind. The direct determination of the will by the law and the consciousness of this determination is respect; thus respect can be

^{vi} Ibid., 16-17. Where Reinken says “leaning” or “leanings,” in original: “inclination” or “inclinations.”

regarded as the effect of the law on the subject and not as the cause of the law. Respect is properly—^{vii}

LS: So in other words, it is not that we have the feeling of respect which then, as it were, projects something which would be the object of respect. But the respect follows the law and is a response to the law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

is properly the conception of a worth which thwarts my self-love. Thus it is regarded as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, though it has something analogous to both. The only object of respect is the law, and indeed only the law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As a law, we are subject to it without consulting self-love; as imposed on us by ourselves, it is a consequence of our will. In the former respect it is analogous to fear and in the latter to inclination.^{viii}

LS: Now let us stop here. We impose the law on ourselves, a point which will be taken up by Kant more fully later.²⁵ In this strict sense, man is autonomous if he imposes the law, the moral law on himself. Now here we understand perhaps somewhat better what Kant means by this equality of all men. Men are equal in the most important respect, namely in the highest respect. And that clearly contradicts what Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau meant.²⁶ What Kant says reminds of the equality of men before God, but there is this difference: in the biblical view the law to which man is subject²⁷ does not originate in man. It is a law of nature, or divine, or whatever it may be but²⁸ man is not autonomous in the Kantian sense.

Now let us read one more point, yes, in the next paragraph²⁹ [in] which Kant raises a question which every reader must have felt necessary to raise at this point.³⁰ “What kind of.”

Mr. Reinken:

kind of a law can that be, the conception of which must determine the will without reference to the expected result? Under this condition alone the will can be called absolutely good without qualification. Since I have robbed the will of all impulses which could come to it from obedience to any law, nothing remains to serve as a principle of the will except universal conformity of its action to law as such. That is, I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should be a universal law. Mere conformity to law as such—^{ix}

LS: To *lawfulness*, to the form of law.

Mr. Reinken: Conformity to law, to the full?

^{vii} Ibid., 17-18.

^{viii} Ibid., 18.

^{ix} Ibid.

LS: No,³¹ the conformity to *lawfulness*—

Mr. Reinken: Oh, lawfulness.

LS: I'm sorry.

Mr. Reinken: Sorry. "Mere conformity to lawfulness (without assuming any particular law applicable to certain actions) serves—"x

LS: No. Without assuming any law limited or directed towards specific actions. For example, it is not, say, a law like "Thou shalt not lie," or something, yeah?³² Lawfulness in general. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

(not assuming any law limited to certain actions) serves as the principle of the will, and it must serve as such a principle if duty is not to be a vain delusion and chimerical concept.^{xi}

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Now Kant has made clear that we act morally if we do not act³³ from ulterior motives. That is intelligible, easily intelligible. He says, furthermore, there must not be any ends: merely the action itself is the end, as we may say for the time being.³⁴ And therefore the question is: What kind of law is that? And Kant gives here this provisional answer:³⁵ we have a maxim. We always have maxims, whether we know them or not, but it is our duty to make them clear to ourselves. And then we have to wish, to will that my maxim on which I habitually act should be capable of becoming a universal law. The maxim should be able to comply with the demand for universal lawfulness, if one can express it this way. And if it is capable of that, then the maxim is morally good, otherwise it is morally bad. There is no law like "Thou shalt not lie," for example. The law is merely formal. You should also be able to will that your maxim should become a universal law. That's the first formulation. Kant will later on call it the categorical imperative.

And the great question is: Where do we get any *determination* of our action? In the traditional view, one would have said that one must do the right thing in the right spirit. But the right spirit itself will not yet tell you what the right thing is. And Kant as it were says: No, the right spirit properly understood will also tell you what the right thing is, and that is the great difficulty which we have tried to understand. Kant gives a provisional example. Let us read that. But first read the end of the paragraph which we began.

Mr. Reinken:

The common reason of mankind in its practical judgments is in perfect agreement with this and has this principle constantly in view.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Ibid.

Let the question, for example, be: May I, when in distress, make a promise with the intention not to keep it? I easily distinguish the two meanings which the question can have, viz., whether it is prudent to make a false promise, or whether it conforms to my duty. Undoubtedly the former can often be the case, though I do see clearly that it is not sufficient merely to escape from the present difficulty by this expedient, but that I must consider whether inconveniences much greater than the present one may not later spring from this lie. Even with all my supposed cunning, the consequences cannot be so easily foreseen. Loss of credit might be far more disadvantageous than the misfortune I now seek to avoid, and it is hard to tell whether it might not be more prudent to act—^{xii}

LS: “Prudent” in the amoral sense, I mean, as it is commonly now used in English. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

to act according to a universal maxim and to make it a habit not to promise anything without intending to fulfill it. But it is soon clear to me that such a maxim is based only on an apprehensive concern with consequences.

To be truthful from duty, however, is an entirely different thing from being truthful out of fear of disadvantageous consequences, for in the former case the concept of the action itself contains a law for me, while in the latter I must first look about to see what results for me may be connected with it. For to deviate from the principle of duty is certainly bad, but to be unfaithful to my maxim of prudence can sometimes be very advantageous to me, though it is certainly safer to abide by it. The shortest but most infallible way to find the answer to the question as to whether a deceitful promise is consistent with duty is to ask myself: Would I be content that my maxim (of extricating myself from difficulty by a false promise) should hold as a universal law for myself as well as for others? And could I say to myself that everyone may make a false promise when he is in a difficulty from which he otherwise cannot escape? I immediately see that I could will the lie but not a universal law to lie. For with such a law there would be no promises at all, inasmuch as it would be futile to make a pretense of my intention in regard to future actions to those who would not believe this pretense or—if they overhastily did so—^{xiii}pay me back in my own coin. Thus my maxim would necessarily destroy itself as soon as it was made a universal law.^{xiv}

LS: What do you say about this reasoning of Kant? I mean, this illustration, this provisional illustration of what he means by the moral law. Many people, perhaps even most people, regard it as implausible, what Kant says, but on what grounds? I mean, what

^{xii} Ibid., 18-19.

^{xiii} In original: “who would pay me”

^{xiv} Ibid., 19.

seems to be the reasoning of that man, or of Kant himself here, by which he convinces himself of the immorality of lying? Yes?

Student: It has a practical or consequential result.

LS: The word “practical” is really two-way here.

Same Student: Well, it has a—

LS: Expediential. In other words,³⁶ although it is meant to be a strictly moral reasoning, it seems to be an expediential or prudential reason.

Mr. Reinken: Except it's *a priori*.

LS: But does he not have to consider what lying does to men under human society?

Mr. Reinken: That may be how he learned the *a priori*, but he claims to understand in advance that there is a self-contradiction. It's like a mathematical proof which showed that there can't be a mapping without a fixed point. You can have things disconfirmed either by experience, which would be experiential, or by a proof in advance. This won't work: the concepts contain a contradiction. And it tries to show the concept of universal breach of promise contains a contradiction in that the term “promise” vanishes. And—

LS: And so—

Mr. Reinken: If you don't have promises you can't have lies so it was the lie which contained the contradiction.

LS: But, then, as Hegel puts it, why do we want promises in the first place?

Mr. Reinken: What he would say [is] that³⁷ well, part of the lie is that you want to be believed. To³⁸ lie means to say what seems to be a promise, but not. So that the concept of “lie” contains that of promise for the suckers to swallow it.

LS: And?

Mr. Reinken: And you universalize it and you find that it won't wash.

LS: In other words, only by regarding your case now as a very special case, as an exception from the general rule, can you lie.

Mr. Reinken: Or . . . more general.

LS: I mean, can you—

Student: Well, I draw distinctions. I say, “in a good cause it would then—”

LS: Ya, but . . .

Student: But something has to be brought . . . lying—

LS: So in other words, the point would be this: that the characteristic of immorality is that the immoral man regards himself, either generally or on any occasion, as exempted from rules. And this ingredient of Kant is a crucial ingredient in Kant's moral thought.

Well, let me give you another example from Kant which³⁹ shows the difficulty perhaps more clearly, and that is taken from *Theory and Practice*,^{xv} from the first Part, which is not translated in your edition. Here is the case. Someone has a deposit in his hand whose owner is dead. And⁴⁰ his heirs⁴¹ do not know anything nor can they ever hear of the fact that he deposited this thing with that man. Present this case to a child of even eight or nine years old. And at the same time that the owner of the deposit without his fault⁴² (the owner is only the possessor of the deposit as is usual),⁴³ the possessor of the deposit is now in this present moment in a very miserable state, and he sees a sad family depressed by need, his wife and children. And he could get out of this predicament at once if he would embezzle or appropriate that deposit. At the same time⁴⁴ this man who is tempted by the embezzlement is a nice man, let us say to cut it a bit short, whereas the heirs are hard-hearted [laughter] and at the same time in the highest degree luxurious and wasteful, so that it would be as good as to throw the deposit into the ocean. [Laughter] And now the question arises, and we ask the eight/nine year old child . . .⁴⁵ Can it be regarded under this condition as permitted that the man may use the deposit for his own benefit? And without any question the child would reply: "No!" [laughter], and instead of all reasons says only that it is *wrong*, for it contradicts duty. Nothing is clearer than that. [Laughter] Now⁴⁶ this is, I think, another and a more extreme case than the one which Kant raises here. Why do you laugh?

Mr. Reinken: I think the child answered no because he identified with the profligate heirs [loud laughter], and he's been having people like this virtuous possessor held up to him all his life [loud laughter] for admiration and he is heartily sick of them. And he's been having people like this virtuous possessor held up to him all his short life [laughter].

LS: Ya, but let us take this situation. Let's assume that⁴⁷ the man who owns now, or has this deposit in his possession, is now badly in need⁴⁸ of money⁴⁹ so that his wife can undergo an operation.⁵⁰ Without the operation she will die and the children will be in a terrible situation, morally in a very bad situation. And then the eight year old child, very much attached to the mother—in addition, of course, there is no physician around to do the operation;⁵¹ [there is] no Medicaid [laughter]. And⁵² is it then so clear? So there is a certain difficulty then in Kant's cases. I didn't mean more than that at the moment.

^{xv} *Theory and Practice: Concerning the Common Saying: This May be True in Theory but Does not Apply to Practice* (1793), in *The Philosophy of Kant*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (NY: Modern Library, 1949).

Now,⁵³ good. We leave it at this and now ask Miss Perkins to read her paper. Oh, Mrs. . . . No, there still [will be] a discussion. Yes?

Student: Oh, isn't⁵⁴ this difficulty you pointed out, isn't it that Kant's concept to some extent giving up on straightening out the mess of experience and just directing yourself towards "if the world were perfect" or "if in an afterlife things worked out as they should" then⁵⁵ [acting] according to the laws which would make them work out. I mean, if you are acting on that principle, isn't it to some extent giving up on trying to straighten things out as they are?

LS:⁵⁶ What would amount to giving up?

Same Student: For instance, you know, the example you gave about the woman who really is going to die without the money. Or let's say Plato's example of if you have to⁵⁷ return to a man what is due him, and he lends you firearms and then he goes crazy and wants to kill himself, do you give back the firearms?

LS: But is not Plato's argument of an entirely different character?

Same Student: Well, isn't it—

LS:⁵⁸ I mean, Kant would of course agree with Plato as a practical man, ya. But if we listen to his statement of the moral problem as we have it understood hitherto, and we can't do more at the time—well, for the time being. What is Plato's argument, or Socrates' argument? . . .

Same Student: Well, is it that you have to have a more profound understanding than just—

LS: Of the situation, as we would say today? So in other words, the rule that you must return deposits is only generally valid, not universally valid. But what is the ground for the qualification? Because the rule to return deposits is based on an assumption that this is a way in which you help your neighbor, ya? I mean, mutual loan and so on—ya, helping your neighbor. And now if in a given case this action, returning deposits, would mean harming your neighbor, then you would not do it. So in other words, the overall rule which both lies at the bottom of the more specific rule, and of the exception to the specific rule, would be a universal rule, would it not?

Same Student:⁵⁹ Then in a man who would like to embezzle money, you look for a more profound rule underlying the idea that you give money back to heirs. In other words, you try to get a deeper understanding of why you would give money back to heirs and then form a different rule as your universal rule.

LS:⁶⁰ Ya, but then you are led first of all through an abyss of difficulties, namely, why is it a humane or benevolent action to give money to people who will make very bad use of

it? . . . and you have first to go first through this; that is what Plato does, fundamentally, whereas Kant does not do that.

Same Student: Yes, that is what I am saying. If you don't undertake that responsibility to do that, aren't you saying to some extent, "Well, if we act reasonably, on this earth, it doesn't necessarily bring people happiness because rational actions aren't in accord with the experiential world, but with some ideal world in the life beyond."

LS: Ya, but we have not yet heard of this, you know? Kant will bring in the future life. But at this stage of the argument he has not yet referred to it . . .

Student: I'm not quite clear on Kant's proof, what he says about lying. Was it because it would be contradictory to commit an exception—?

LS:⁶¹ Ya,⁶² it would be impossible to transform your maxim on which you habitually act into a law valid for all men, for all rational beings. For all rational beings.

Same Student: Well, then why wouldn't it be just as valid to say "all men should lie and that in this instance if I tell the truth it would invalidate that maxim?" Because . . . universal . . .

LS: Then⁶³ you would destroy confidence, of course.

Same Student: Well, then it rests upon something other than self-contradiction.

LS: Ya, but that is a point usually made by the critics of Kant, that the experiential reasonings come in. But let me say at this time only this much.⁶⁴ Even if there were such a thing as an experiential reasoning in these examples we read and others which will occur in the second section, there would still be this difference (the minimum one would have to say): that the experiential reasoning is the *ratio cognoscendi* (I will translate that) but not the *ratio obligandi*—meaning we can recognize our duty by making such experiential considerations: "Is this compatible with human beings living together?" or what have you. But we don't do it for the *sake* of living together but for the sake of doing our duty, because for the sake of living together we might do very immoral things—right or wrong my country and all this kind of thing, ya?—whereas morality is then only the reason of obligation.⁶⁵ Now whether this is sufficient we must see. Now let us . . .

Student: I was just wondering whether Miss . . .'s point about the responsibility of considering the whole situation is actually contained in what kind of a maxim you want to state for your universalizing, because you have to state your maxim—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: And of course the maxims can be stated in very different ways.⁶⁶ Depending on how general the maxim is, the maxim can take into account more or less of the actual situation. In other words, one might—

LS: But then it would not be a maxim if it is only⁶⁷ a description of the actions⁶⁸ you intended.

Same Student: I meant something, for instance: one man might say an act of the maxim of a particular act of stealing is “Don’t steal.”⁶⁹ And that one is universalizable,⁷⁰ and that prohibits all acts of stealing. But someone else might say “Steal from the rich and give to the poor.” That’s a maxim too. And that could be universalizable, and he might want to act on that such that everyone might act on that maxim. Now this prohibits stealing, and this allows, you know—

LS: Except that it is open to objections because of the indeterminate character of what poor and rich means.

Same Student: But one could also say that about the more general one about stealing.

LS: No.⁷¹ That does not suffer from indeterminacy, because it forbids all stealing.

Same Student: Well, the question there is whether one would want to define a particular act of stealing. In other words, if a man has, say, more than he uses on a lot maybe he doesn’t have a right to that particular property, so maybe it is not his property and stealing is defined as taking his property when—

LS: Ya, but then the question is, you know, that the right way is then to question openly his right to the property before a court of law or whatever you might do, instead of stealing. Because stealing⁷² implies the admission that it is his property.

Same Student:⁷³ That really doesn’t take into account the other ways of stating the maxim, in other words, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. Is it simply because that’s not defined determinately that that’s not—?

LS: No. I mean, I think that the point would be this: that⁷⁴ you surely would have to define what you understand by rich and by poor.

Same Student: Okay.

LS: If you mean that [LS taps on the desk] starving people may steal in order not to starve, this is generally admitted, you know?

Same Student: Well then,⁷⁵ [that] doesn’t seem to be admitted by Kantian principle?

LS: But Kant would surely admit that. [In other words, that is generally admitted by Kant, if you make this qualification: Is this theft, if someone is really starving and sees the roll or whatever it is and takes away this roll and gobbles it up]?⁷⁶

Same Student: On the discussion we just had it clearly is, because it's his property and on that basis he should go to court and challenge that man's right to the property.

LS: Pardon? [Students chuckle] No. That is, we can assume that he is really starving, *in extremis* he can no longer wait until he gets the decision of the court. Now let us see until we come to . . . examples.

Mr. Reinken: I think that there is a point available but⁷⁷ Kant himself distinguishes the transcendent order which is sort of perpendicular to the chain of being—

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: distinctions without a material difference. The maxim, Kant would have to concede, on which an identical action is taken would be a very different maxim. And so the embezzling possessor might say: Oh no. My maxim has nothing to do with embezzlement. My rule of living is: Always act so to increase the happiness of everyone I can, in proportion as they are close to me, [and this] would be the justification [for] why I spread good around me. Charity begins at home. [Laughter]

LS: Yes. Good. But that—

Mr. Reinken:⁷⁸ “And if everybody did this, we would have everybody tilling their garden and growing nothing but roses.”

LS: Ya, but the problem here is⁷⁹ that charity begins not simply at home, but it trespasses on other people's ground [laughter]. And then you would have to say⁸⁰ everyone is under law or under obligation to take care of the interest of his family, regardless of what happens to any other people. And then you would get into some difficulty.

Mr. Reinken: No, I mean,⁸¹ say a weighted average—

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: The presupposition of this was that the money was going to do a great deal more good at home than it would with these spendthrift heirs. If everybody simply puts things where they will do the most good—

LS: But then they—

Mr. Reinken: Then on the whole people will be doing quite well. Maximum utilization of economy.

LS: But the question of course . . . which you would have to face would be: Who is the judge? And Kant, as you know, says here that these questions can in principle be settled by everyone. And here, in the way in which you stated the difficulty, that⁸² requires a very high degree of competence.

Mr. Reinken: A computer.

LS: Yes [laughter].⁸³ Of course that would be incompatible with⁸⁴ autonomy if we leave the moral decisions to computers. What will become of us human beings?

Student: It appears that Kant, in order to make a law which for all people regardless of the amount of their reason will follow, or in principle the will that all men regardless of their reason will follow, has eliminated the role of discretion. In other words, if one thought that a law could be applied by men of good judgment, then one could say that men ought to take into account, for instance whether a woman might starve if the money is not embezzled. But if one leaves that up to men and says that you may count those circumstances, then at least some men will be biased in their judgment, and some men simply won't be able to calculate the consequences properly, whereas if you leave the law at its most simple and general level, then no discretion, or a minimum of discretion—

LS: Ya, that seems to be—I mean, from certain statements in Kant, especially the one I read from *Theory and Practice*, that seems to be what Kant had in mind. But that is not true, because Kant is very much concerned with judgment, as we will see. But at first glance it seems to be a wonderful . . . so that everyone, even the child of eight or nine years can solve every moral difficulty which arises. This is not quite what Kant means. But he gives us cause to think that's what he is trying to do.

Same Student: That purpose seems to be the reason why Kant insists that the laws be at the most general level, for instance, you cannot lie, rather than taking into account further circumstances; because once you start doing that, once you took the law to anything but the most general level, there would be more judgment required, and therefore it would be more difficult for eight year olds to apply it.

LS: I suggest that we ask now Mrs. . . . to read her paper,⁸⁵ because here the famous examples occur only in the second section.^{xvi}

LS: Mrs. . . . , there is one point which I would⁸⁶ like to take up first. Kant speaks here, in this section of the latter half, of the alternative moral doctrines. And one of them he regards as the best, although still insufficient. And which is that?

Student: That's the rational perfection based on ontology.

LS: And⁸⁷ do you know any names?

Same Student: I would think of someone like Aristotle, for example.

LS: Yes. Ultimately a very good answer. Yes; and of course Thomas,^{xvii} and in Kant's own age the German Christian Wolff.^{xviii} Yes. And Kant knew Wolff much better than he

^{xvi} The reading of the student's paper is not recorded. The tape resumes with Strauss's response.

^{xvii} Thomas Aquinas.

did the original sources.⁸⁸ So in other words—but it is the whole classical position. And what is Kant's objection?⁸⁹ I mean, he rejects hedonism and other things without any question, yet it is not this easy. But why is this notion of this kind of morality which takes its bearing by the perfection of our nature—why is this, even this, inadequate?

Same Student: I think for two reasons that I can recall at the moment. One is that saying that our natures go toward perfection is already assuming what you would like to prove at the end. In other words, we are moral in order to make us perfect, but we are perfectible by the fact of our human nature.

LS: Yes. Could one not state it as following: the traditional doctrine⁹⁰ which speaks, for example, of man's natural inclinations as good and the basis of goodness,⁹¹ how do we know that the natural inclinations are good? In other words, is there not a dogmatic assumption underlying traditional morality? The goodness of nature. Must this assumption not first be established? And Kant's general view is only this: yes,⁹² we cannot presuppose the goodness of natural inclinations.⁹³ We cannot presuppose that there are any good ends, natural ends. For that they are good has to be established by a primary reflection, which he is giving in his moral works, especially *The Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*.

So here, in a way, if we disregard the theoretical morality, all these other doctrines are based on nature. I mean hedonism for example. But Kant is the first who tries to liberate man (to use an expression used by him) from the apron string of nature. And therefore, the key word is now no longer "nature" but "reason." And therefore also the whole question of the formalism, you know, the formal law, because every content would be taken from nature or from experience.

Now as to the categorical imperative, what is the relation of the good will⁹⁴ which has been the key word in the first section to the categorical imperative of which he speaks in the second section?

Same Student:⁹⁵ Well, the unconditionally good will is that which does not need the categorical imperative as an imperative because it is in its nature to act this way and only this way.

LS: In other words, only God's will would be a good will simply. And⁹⁶ [what] is a characteristic difference of *human* will, and why does the characteristic of the human will make necessary an imperative?

Same Student: Because the human will has a subjective element, which is connected with the sensible world in which contingencies which our inclinations for example lead us to, which we go against . . .

^{xviii} Christian Wolff (b. 1679), rationalist philosopher, called by Kant in his Preface to *The Critique of Pure Reason* "the greatest of all dogmatic philosophers."

LS: More simply, the human will is not necessarily good, ya, whereas God's will is necessarily good. And therefore the law applies equally to all rational beings. But in the case of man the law has a character of a command, whereas it does not have the character of a command in the case of God. And what is the relation of command and imperative?

Same Student: . . .

LS: So⁹⁷ the moral law has only in the case of man or other finite rational beings the character of a command. But what is the relation of command and imperative?

Same Student: Is the command given by the will? Is that—

LS: Ya,⁹⁸ but that's not the point here.

Same Student: I don't—

LS: Well,⁹⁹ what is the imperative?

Mr. Reinken: Is objective in the commands—

LS: No.¹⁰⁰ The imperative is a *formula* for the command . . .¹⁰¹ But in order to understand the categorical imperative, one must distinguish it from the alternative, the other kinds of imperatives, and which are?

Student: The hypothetical of skill and the hypothetical of prudence. I—

LS: Yes.

Same Student: He has particular names for them. The assertorical is the prudence and—

LS: Ya, but¹⁰² it is not necessary.¹⁰³ In other words, the categorical imperative is distinguished from hypothetical imperatives. Of hypothetical imperatives there are two kinds, the imperatives of skill and the imperatives of prudence. Now what is the imperative of skill?

Same Student: That's the hypothetical that commands you what to do if you wish to achieve any given purpose that your will is able to achieve.

LS: An example.

Same Student: For example, if you should want to become a doctor,¹⁰⁴ the hypothetical imperative would say: If you want to become a doctor then you must go to medical school.

LS: Even a simpler example: you want to cut a tree, you must do this and this. And so the imperatives of skills have [LS taps on table] particular ends, and these ends are fundamentally arbitrary, contingent.

But¹⁰⁵ the imperative of prudence differ for two reasons. Because in the first place,¹⁰⁶ whether we want to cut a tree or not to cut, or whether we want to study medicine and so,¹⁰⁷ we can also want something else. But that with which prudence is concerned is not something which we cannot want, namely, it is happiness.¹⁰⁸ Therefore the imperatives of skill have to do with particulars, [and] prudence has to do with the whole of human life, with our happiness, with [LS taps on the table] each one's happiness.¹⁰⁹ And this end, happiness, is not subject to our arbitrary will. But nevertheless,¹¹⁰ imperatives of prudence have one thing in common with imperatives of skill: that they presuppose the end . . . in the imperative of skill, let us take the case of the cutting of a tree. We presuppose the end, the cutting of the tree, and then think about the means. In the other case, we presuppose the end of happiness, and then we think about the means.

In the categorical imperative there is no such presupposition of an *end*. The categorical imperative says: "Do this." And not as the other imperatives say "in order to cut a tree, to become a musician, to become happy."^{xix} The categorical imperative commands categorically, without any "whys" and of course ultimately without any "ifs" and "buts." Yes.

Now what is the general relation of this section to the second section, to the first one? Let us look at the titles. Read this.

Mr. Reinken: The first one was "Transition from the Common Rational Knowledge of Morals to the Philosophical." The second, "Transition from the Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysics of Morals."

LS: So in other words, in the first section Kant starts or claims to start from what every ordinary human being without any training knows or is aware of. And here he starts from the available academic literature, so to speak. That is what he means here [by] popular moral metaphysics and philosophy.¹¹¹ He starts, in a sense, higher and he raises higher. The point is made clear later on.¹¹² The paragraph beginning on page¹¹³ [412].¹¹⁴

Mr. Reinken:

In this study we do not advance merely from the common moral judgment (which here is very worthy of respect)—^{xx}

LS: Ya. Again, because, for example, it is because the multitude is worthy of respect. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{xix} Strauss repeatedly taps on the table for emphasis.

^{xx} Ibid., 29.

to the philosophical, as this has already been done, but we advance by natural stages from a popular philosophy (which goes no further than it can grope by means of examples) to metaphysics (which is not held back by anything empirical and which, as it must measure out the entire scope of rational knowledge of this kind, reaches even Ideas, where examples fail us). In order to make this advance, we must follow and clearly present the practical faculty of reason from its universal rules of determination to the point where the concept of duty arises from it.^{xxi}

LS: Ya. So in other words, the difference is to that extent clear between the two sections. As a consequence, this section is much more technical than the first, and the first crucial point is the elaboration of the concept of imperatives, and the distinction of the various kinds of imperatives and especially to make clear the character of the categorical imperative.

Now there is one point¹¹⁵ on which Kant insists very much, and that is that the hypothetical imperatives are logically described analytical judgments.¹¹⁶ Kant means by this that the proposition “If I will the end, I must will the means” is an analytical proposition. If I understand the concept of end, I see that it implies means; whereas the categorical imperative, however, has the character of¹¹⁷ a synthetic judgment *a priori*, i.e., belongs to the¹¹⁸ more interesting kinds of judgments. Well, at this point we will begin next time.

¹ Deleted “and to Miss....”

² Deleted “which....”

³ Deleted “If there is....”

⁴ Deleted “they would say....”

⁵ Deleted “there is....”

⁶ Deleted “I....”

⁷ Deleted “Let us contrast...look at a passage....”

⁸ Deleted “in....”

⁹ Deleted “and he....”

¹⁰ Deleted “So, here...this is...now, let us....”

¹¹ Deleted “gentle morality....”

¹² Deleted “He is...that...and we will discuss it”

¹³ Deleted “He....”

¹⁴ Deleted “in a very....”

¹⁵ Deleted “draw....”

¹⁶ Deleted “And...and he must...because...the...the means....”

¹⁷ Deleted “Even...we....”

¹⁸ Deleted “and....”

¹⁹ Deleted “meant....”

²⁰ Deleted “this is....”

²¹ Deleted “But he means also....”

²² Deleted “those that also....”

²³ Deleted “**Reinken:** [inaudible word] **LS:** Yeah. **Reinken:** [inaudible word].”

²⁴ Deleted “we....”

²⁵ Deleted “The autonomy....”

²⁶ Deleted “It....”

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- 27 Deleted “is not...”
- 28 Deleted “it is not...”
- 29 Deleted “which begins...and.”
- 30 Deleted “What...”
- 31 Deleted “to...to the...”
- 32 Deleted “The...the.”
- 33 Deleted “with a view...”
- 34 Deleted “Does...”
- 35 Deleted “it is...”
- 36 Deleted “he brings...”
- 37 Deleted “we want...want is just that...it is the lie...is that...is it the lie can...”
- 38 Deleted “lie...”
- 39 Deleted “is...”
- 40 Deleted “the...”
- 41 Deleted “have not...”
- 42 Deleted “has become...”
- 43 Deleted “the owner...”
- 44 Deleted “he is...”
- 45 Deleted “is it...”
- 46 Deleted “what...what...what is the difficulty...”
- 47 Deleted “this...”
- 48 Deleted “for...”
- 49 Deleted “in order to undergo...”
- 50 Deleted “The wife is...”
- 51 Deleted “without...”
- 52 Deleted “what...”
- 53 Deleted “let us then...”
- 54 Deleted “that...”
- 55 Deleted “act.”
- 56 Deleted “What...what would...”
- 57 Deleted “return a man...”
- 58 Deleted “Is it not...”
- 59 Deleted “Then you...”
- 60 Deleted “Yes but would it not...in other words...the...”
- 61 Deleted “It would...”
- 62 Deleted “you would...”
- 63 Deleted “there would no longer be...”
- 64 Deleted “An experiential...”
- 65 Changed from “And...whereas the morality...morality is then only the *ratio*...reason of obligation.”
- 66 Deleted “One might.”
- 67 Deleted “the...”
- 68 Deleted “**Same Student:** Well I know—”
- 69 Deleted “Or...or...you know.”
- 70 Deleted “But someone else...”
- 71 Deleted “That is...that is...”
- 72 Deleted “means...”
- 73 Deleted “What...I’m not too sure that...”
- 74 Deleted “it would not be...you would have to state it with...”
- 75 Deleted “Kant’s...”
- 76 Changed from “In other words, that is clear, that they...I mean, that is generally I mean would be also admitted by Kant, because it...it is not...he...if you make this qualification...I mean in other words...is this...is this...theft, does this consider theft if someone is really starving and sees the roll or whatever it is and takes away this roll and gobbles it up—”
- 77 Deleted “to go...”
- 78 Deleted “And I just try to...”

-
- 79 Deleted "that his...."
80 Deleted "I...my...."
81 Deleted "at...at this...."
82 Deleted "reaches...."
83 Deleted "That is."
84 Deleted "the."
85 Deleted "and...."
86 Deleted "take up...."
87 Deleted "whom...."
88 Deleted "And why is...."
89 Deleted "Why does...."
90 Deleted "which expresses...."
91 Deleted "that...."
92 Deleted "we have to start...."
93 Deleted "We have to...."
94 Deleted "of...."
95 Deleted "The good will is that which...."
96 Deleted "what is the difference then...."
97 Deleted "the...in other...."
98 Deleted "that is...that is...."
99 Deleted "Kant...."
100 Deleted "The imperative...no, the command is as objective...is of a...."
101 Deleted "So now, imperative...."
102 Deleted "let us omit...."
103 Deleted "to do so the...the...."
104 Deleted "then you would...then you...."
105 Deleted "then there is something...."
106 Deleted "we do not...."
107 Deleted "this is a matter...."
108 Deleted "So whereas the skills have to...to do...."
109 Deleted "To that extent...."
110 Deleted "it...."
111 Deleted "That...."
112 Deleted "in this...do you have any...any [inaudible word] pages? Let me see... **Reinken:** I have the numbers. **LS:** Which...which numbers? **Reinken:** In mine the numbers are— **LS:** The 412."
113 Deleted "409."
114 Deleted "**Reinken:** From— **LS:** 'But in order—' **Reinken:** 'In this study we do not advance merely from the common moral judgment—' **LS:** Yeah read...read again from the beginning."
115 Deleted "in which...."
116 Deleted "Meaning...."
117 Deleted "an synthetic judgment of...."
118 Deleted "most...."

Session 7: April 25, 1967

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —morals, otherwise¹ we cannot proceed in too strict a manner. Now, first. Now one point which I believe we have not considered: Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, as moral philosophy in general, belongs to the sphere of practical reason, which is understood in contradistinction to theoretical reason. Now² what does practical reason mean? We see the reason related to action, to practice.³ According to⁴ the view prevailing at present, there are no *praxis*, no practical reason—or, to speak in more academic terms, there are no practical sciences. For example, even such a practical thing like home economics is of course a theoretical pursuit. One could make a distinction between theoretical and applied sciences, but practical sciences are not applied sciences. Applied sciences are theoretical sciences which are then afterward applied to practical problems. A practical science is one which is *essentially* independent of theoretical sciences and essentially practical. The practical sciences (this notion stems from Aristotle) have principles of their own, which cannot be reduced to theoretical principles.

Now there is an equivalent of that in our age, insofar as in the common practice of the social sciences people take it for granted that the starting point, the highest principles of the social sciences, to the extent to which they refer to human actions, are *values*. And these values are not [LS taps on the table] theoretical principles. This is emphasized all the time. And⁵ according to the crudest view, which is now very powerful, values are simply posits—products, whatever it may be—of emotions, on the lowest level of likes and dislikes. But these values, according to the present-day common understanding [LS taps on the table], are not in Kant's language categorical. They are hypothetical. Say, someone may be enamored of liberal democracy. That's his business; then he will look at political or social matters from the point of view of liberal democracy. But this is just his preference. He may have a preference for collectivism, and that is from the point of view of social science as feasible and reasonable as the other.

Now, but there is one, nevertheless—one great difference between Aristotle and Kant although they agree as to the irreducibility of practical knowledge or practical science. And that is this: I think that I am able to draw this schema [LS writes on the blackboard]. Let us assume this is the individual or the group concerned with action. And then it looks ultimately, or primarily at the *end* or ends. And⁶ then one seeks means for these ends. One does not look beyond the ends; one does not make an attempt to *reduce* these ends to something more fundamental, more primary. Aristotle and Kant agree as to this. Is there any difficulty, my picture?

Student: I missed who you're talking about here. Is this Aristotle or Kant?

LS: I am speaking now what practical knowledge as such means. But now⁷ let us see the difference between Kant and Aristotle.

This is the point of view which Kant preserves more radically than any earlier thinker, or even later thinker.⁸ But in Aristotle it is only a part of a larger whole. And⁹ so¹⁰ Kant the philosopher stands all the time, even in his most subtle or abstract reflections, at the same

point at which the common actor stands. He only states it more radically and more abstractly. But this position [LS taps the blackboard] is exactly that of the common man, common actor.

Aristotle, however, if one takes his *Ethics* as a whole—say, the whole ten books and not merely the earlier part—somehow stands here, also here [LS writes on the blackboard]. Aristotle sees this whole sphere of action from without. He sees it both from within [and] without, and the reason is that for Aristotle the whole practical sphere is subordinate, the whole practical life is subordinate, to the theoretical life. Is this clear? And for Kant just the opposite is true:¹¹ all theoretical knowledge ultimately is in the service of practical reason.

Now I will illustrate a bit by contrasting Aristotle's approach with that of Plato. Now when Aristotle speaks of the virtues, moral virtues, in his *Ethics*, he just presents them as they are known, more or less clearly, to acting men. For example, that something is a virtue or something is a vice is, to begin with, sufficiently known by the fact that the virtue in question is praised and the vice in question is blamed. Aristotle does not go much beyond that. He does go beyond it by giving a much more detailed and circumstantial description, say, of courage, or of liberality, or stinginess than we would be able to do offhand. But fundamentally it is what every man in ordinary life *means* by these things. Good.

Now Plato, in the *Republic* especially, we can see proceeds in a very different way. Plato speaks of various virtues but he tries to show that there are or can be only these and these virtues—that is to say, four, because the virtues are qualities of the soul and the soul has these and these parts. And¹² therefore there can only be so and so many virtues. So one can say [that] Plato deduces the virtues of which he speaks from something theoretically known: the character of the soul. Aristotle refuses to.

In spite of this however, there is, one can say, at least at first glance a very close connection between Kant and Plato rather than between Kant and Aristotle,¹³ as is superficially indicated by two facts. Plato, in contradistinction to Aristotle, says virtue is knowledge—which you can turn around, also: knowledge is virtue. So that is to say¹⁴ this would seem to mean there is no purely theoretical knowledge, once you go beyond the secondary sciences and arts like mathematics and the common arts. And the second point: the highest principle at which Plato arrives is called by [Plato] himself the good or the idea of the good. And this has obviously something directly connected with the good for man. Now, this much about this point for the time being.

Now to be somewhat more specific: one may call Kant's position, the position peculiar to Kant, *moralism*. And I do not mean to use this now in a polemical or negative sense. I mean by moralism the view that morality is the one thing needful. Everything else can be questioned, as he stated at the beginning of the *Foundation*. Morality alone cannot be questioned. Now let us contrast this with the older, more common view, for example in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa against the Gentiles*, book 3, chapter 34, where Thomas tries to show that morality cannot be the highest: "All moral acts are orderable to something

else.” For example, justice is ordered to keeping peace among men. Now here you see the difference between Thomas—and that means also Aristotle and most pre-Kantian philosophers: morality is not directed towards something else, but it is the only thing unqualifiedly good, intrinsically good, good without any reference to anything else.

Kant claims that this view is in agreement with common sense and is in fact the only philosophic view possible that is in agreement with common sense. And surely common sense, prephilosophic thought, may be said to assert that the good man does the right things in the right spirit, meaning for their own sake and not for fear of punishment or expectation of reward or anything beyond the consciousness of having done the right thing.

Now if we do the right things for their own sake, there cannot be anything else¹⁵ for the sake of which we are to do them. Morality serves no end outside of itself. It does not presuppose any such end, and therefore, if we take doing the right things in the right spirit as the simple formula for morality, this morality leads to the famous formalism of Kant. There cannot be any matter or end which justifies or explains the categoric imperative, the moral law. But of course Kant must show, if his whole entire enterprise is not to be in vain, that the form supplies somehow the matter. Or, in other words, that the right *spirit*, the good will, the spirit of obedience and respect for the moral law, necessarily produces as it were the right things. Kant speaks of the good will, which he also calls from time to time the pure will. The question is: Is such a will possible?

Kant makes quite clear that the possibility of the good will cannot be proven from any experience. We may believe we know a man of the greatest excellence, his moral excellence, yet we cannot see into his heart. And whether he does the right things for their own sake, and not¹⁶ for some calculation, like good reputation—not to appear foolish, not to appear inconsistent or what have you—we cannot know. I think we should read one passage on this subject. Now let me see; in our second section, of course.¹⁷ Ya, begin here, on page 36, bottom.

Mr. Reinken: “To see how the imperative of morality is possible is, then—”ⁱ

LS: The imperative of morality: that is the categoric imperative, ya.

Mr. Reinken:

without doubt the only question needing an answer. It is not hypothetical, and thus the objectively conceived necessity cannot be supported by any presupposition, as was the case with the hypothetical imperatives.ⁱⁱ

LS: The hypothetical imperatives, like the imperatives of skill or the imperatives of prudent calculations, are hypothetical because there is no *necessity*, no moral necessity to accept the ends which they serve. But here [LS taps on the table] . . . and therefore, the principles, the imperatives are hypothetical. Now we come to the point. Yes?

ⁱ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 36.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., 37.

Mr. Reinken:

But it must not be overlooked that it cannot be shown by any example (i.e., it cannot be empirically shown) whether or not there is such an imperative; it is rather to be suspected that all imperatives which appear to be categorical may yet be hypothetical, but in a hidden way. For instance, when it is said, "Thou shalt not make a false promise," we assume that the necessity of this avoidance is not a mere counsel for the sake of escaping some other evil, so that it would read: "Thou shalt not make a false promise so that, if comes to light, thou ruinest thy credit"; we assume rather that an action of this kind must be regarded as of itself bad and that the—ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: "Evil." Evil would be a better translation.

Mr. Reinken:

evil, wicked,
and that the imperative of the prohibition is categorical. But we cannot show with certainty by any example that the will is here determined by the law alone without any other incentives, even though this appears to be the case. For it is always possible that secret fear of disgrace, and perhaps also obscure apprehension of other dangers, may have had an influence on the will. Who can prove by experience the non-existence of a cause when experience shows us only that we do not perceive the cause? But in such a case the so-called moral imperative, which as such appears to be categorical and unconditional, would be actually only a pragmatic precept which makes us attentive to our own advantage and teaches us to consider it.^{iv}

LS: Now I think we can leave it at that, thank you very much. So in other words, we cannot know—as Kant has said already before, we cannot know in *any* case, that is to say, anything known to us through experience, that any man, we or other people, ever acted morally.

Now I will read to you or remind you of some passages in the 51st Psalm, where David prays: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."^v A bit later: "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."^{vi} In other words,¹⁸ purity of heart is possible only through God's assistance, through God's *initiative*. But this precisely is denied by Kant. Man is not *essentially* in need of God's cleansing or purifying his heart. Man *can* be pure of heart, he can have a good will without divine grace. This is implied in the fact that the moral law is the law of reason, and that man's *own* reason, not God's reason, dictates that law.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Psalm 51:10. Strauss reads from the King James Version.

^{vi} Psalm 51:15.

Now in conclusion to these introductory remarks, let me return to the difficulty which I stated shortly before: How can the form of the law produce the matter? Now I have referred earlier in this course to Rousseau's doctrine of the general will. When he speaks or uses the phrase "generalizing the will," we have a will prior to any action of ours as members of a legislative assembly. And then when we act in the assembly, we are compelled to generalize the will, because what we are to determine now is not what I will, but a law. And therefore I have to look at my will, for example, the will not to pay any taxes, in the form "there shall be a law that *no one* shall pay taxes." And then I see that my previous will is foolish.

Kant radicalizes this much beyond the realm of politics. Kant speaks not of the previous will only [LS taps on the table] willing this or that or not willing this or that, but of the maxim on which I would like or inclined to act. And then I have¹⁹ not to generalize merely but to universalize my maxim—and if my maxim stands the test of universalization then it is permitted or moral. And failing that it is immoral.

Now the matter, in other words, which we need is supplied by the maxims. We always have maxims, but the morality is not supplied by the maxims. The morality is supplied only by the quality of the maxims to be universalizable. Is this,²⁰ up to this point, clear?

So²¹ it seems that the question of the matter doesn't arise. The precise solution of this problem occurs not in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* but in the somewhat later work, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Now will you read, Mr. Reinken, on page 72, here. Now one moment: this is part of the section called "Of the Typic of Pure Practical Judgment." We cannot go within the short time at our disposal into this very technical language of Kant. We simply leave it at that, as if there were no particular difficulty involved. To some extent what we have to read now is intelligible by itself. Now.

Mr. Reinken: "The rule of judgment—"vii

LS: "*The rule.*" I would underline that, or emphasize that.

Mr. Reinken:

*The rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is: Ask yourself whether, if the action which you propose should take place by a law of nature of which you yourself were a part—*viii

LS: Just as in Rousseau's scheme, you are a part of the assembly which decides about paying or not paying taxes. So it wouldn't make sense if you were stating the problem of an assembly in [a] South Sea Island; then you can still go on to say, "No. No taxes there." It's none of your business. But here of a [law of] nature of which you are a part. Yes.

vii Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 72.

viii Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: “of which²² you yourself were a part, you could regard it as possible through your will—”^{ix}

LS: “Through your will.” That is important. Both you are a *member* of that “assembly” or that whole; and *you* are responsible. Would you²³ regard it as possible through your will. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Everyone does, in fact, decide by this rule whether actions are morally good or bad. Thus people ask: If one belonged to such an order of things that anyone would allow himself to deceive when he thought it to his advantage, or felt justified in shortening his life as soon as he was thoroughly weary of it, or looked with complete indifference on the need of others, would he assent of his own will to being a member of such an order of things? Now everyone knows very well that if he secretly permits himself to deceive, it does not follow that everyone else will do so, or that if, unnoticed by others, he is lacking in compassion, it does not mean that everyone else will immediately take the same attitude toward him. This comparison of the maxims of his actions with a universal natural law, therefore, is not the determining ground of his will.^x

LS: That is crucial. That is not the determining ground of his will because, on the basis of mere calculation, it might well pay to lie or to be uncharitable and so on and so on. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “But such a law is still—”^{xi}

LS: And here he speaks [of] a general, natural law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

But such a law is still a type for the estimation of maxims according to moral principles. If the maxim of action is not so constituted as to stand the test of being made the form of a natural law in general, it is morally impossible [though it may still be possible in nature]. Even—^{xii}

LS: Now let us stop here. Now in other words,²⁴ as we will see later on in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, there is one strict formula and that is the one which we have read last time; but then there are also types, as Kant calls it, or, as one can say, symbolic presentations of the moral law which are very helpful for us to make clear the meaning of the moral law, although we must not take these types as literally true.

Now let us skip the end of this paragraph as well as the next, and then go on.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Ibid. Brackets in original.

Mr. Reinken:

Furthermore, since of all intelligible objects absolutely nothing [is known] except freedom (through the moral law), and even this only insofar as it is a presupposition inseparable from the moral law; and since, moreover, all intelligible objects to which reason might eventually lead us under the guidance of the law can have no reality for us except for the purpose of this law and of the use of pure practical reason; and, finally, since reason has a right, and is even compelled, to use nature (in its pure intelligible form) as the type of judgment—for all these reasons the present remark should serve to guard against counting among the concepts themselves what merely belongs to the type of the concepts.^{xiii}

LS: “Typic” meaning the symbolic presentation so that we can make it clearer to ourselves. As it were, we can have a kind of *image* of the moral law, it is not the moral law proper. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This, as the type of judgment, guards against the empiricism of practical reason, which bases the practical concepts of good and evil merely on empirical consequences (on so-called happiness).^{xiv}

LS: Now we come to the sentence which is crucial.

Mr. Reinken:

Happiness and infinite useful consequences of a will determined only by [the maxim of] helping itself could—^{xv}

LS: I believe²⁵ that this is a printing error already in the German, and it means self-love, not self-help. So read it as if it that’s in there. Otherwise it wouldn’t—

Mr. Reinken: “determined only by—”^{xvi}

LS: Self-love. “Although happiness in the infinite useful consequences of a will determined by self-love,” we add “alone.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

by self-love alone could, if this will made itself into a universal law, certainly—
^{xvii}

LS: A universal law of nature.

^{xiii} Ibid., 73. Brackets in original.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid. Brackets in original.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: Of nature.

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Reinken:

a universal law of nature, certainly serve as a very adequate type for the morally good but still not be identical with it.^{xviii}

LS: Yes. See, in other words: if you look at any action from this point of view, if you want to be happy, you love yourself and you can't help loving yourself, and now you consider your self-love in the form of a universal law, meaning that *everyone else* is as much entitled to his self-love as you. And you see it as a natural law, meaning [that] all must, i.e. should be concerned with their self-love. This is a typic, a symbolic presentation of the moral law, because what determines your will is not your self-love but the universality of the principle. It is only a *modus cognoscendi*, a form of *knowing* what you may or may not do. We have to keep this in mind when we come later on to the examples, which at first glance seem to contradict . . . what Kant teaches there.

Now, one second. I want to show some of his examples. Yes. ²⁶Let us now²⁷ return to the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*²⁸ in the neighborhood where we left off. That is to say roughly page 420.

Now in the sequel here, Kant still leaves it open how the categoric imperative is possible. This question will be discussed in the third section. For the time being he is only concerned with the formula of the categoric imperative. And this formula we have on page 421 top, in the German. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:²⁹

There is, therefore, only one categorical imperative. It is: Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.^{xix}

LS: So that is the strict and the only strict formula, yes. And now³⁰ skip the next paragraph and then go on.

Mr. Reinken:

The universality of law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as to form)—^{xx}

LS: No, it is more than that: *only* with a view to the form. That is the meaning. Nature according to its form is characterized by universality³¹ of the law regarding effects, meaning the law of cause and effect. Yes. Now read this from the beginning.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 39.

^{xx} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

The universality of law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (with a view to the form), i.e., the existence of things so far as it is determined by universal laws.^{xxi} Then, the universal imperative of duty can be expressed—^{xxii}

LS: “Could!” Could, could. That is very important. “Could also run as follows.” Ya.

Mr. Reinken: “could be expressed as follows: Act as though the—”^{xxiii}

LS: “As if,” ya. As if. Yes.³² In other words, there is perfect agreement in substance between the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and that crucial section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* regarding the typic, only Kant does not explicitly speak of it here. This is a typic in Kant’s sense, a symbolical presentation of the moral law and not the strict formula as was stated before, and Kant uses this now in order to show how the categoric imperative supplies some content.

Now let us read the first example. The second paragraph after that.

Mr. Reinken:

A man who is reduced to despair by a series of evils feels a weariness with life but is still in possession of his reason sufficiently to ask whether it would not be contrary to his duty to himself—^{xxiv}

LS: To ask himself, ya. “To ask himself.”

Mr. Reinken:

to ask himself whether it would not be contrary to his duty³³ to take his own life. Now he asks whether the maxim—^{xxv}

LS: No, no. Now he makes an experiment, which is not quite literal but much better than “asks.” Now he “tries.” Now he tries. He experiments. Ya?

Mr. Reinken: He considers.

LS: No. It has a somewhat stronger meaning than “considers.” He makes an experiment—

Mr. Reinken: Puts the question.

^{xxi} In original: “[By analogy].” Brackets in original.

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Ibid.

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Ibid.

LS: No. More! He steps forward, as it were. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: he makes the experiment

whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. His maxim, however, is: For love of myself, I make it my principle to shorten my life when by a longer duration it threatens more evil than satisfaction.^{xxvi}

LS: No: “than it promises satisfaction.” All right.

Mr. Reinken: promises “satisfaction. But it is questionable whether this principle of self-love—”^{xxvii}

LS: No. The only thing still questionable is this. This is his maxim, stated . . . There is only one question left, namely:

Mr. Reinken: “But only this is questionable: whether this principle—”^{xxviii}

LS: *This* principle of self-love as stated, namely, if life threatens more evils than it promises good, whether this principle of self-love can become a universal law of nature.

Mr. Reinken: “One immediately sees—”^{xxix}

LS: No. “Soon.” Kant is not so rash. “Then one sees soon—”

Mr. Reinken:

sees soon a contradiction in a system of nature whose law would be to destroy life by the feeling whose special office is to impel the improvement of life. In this case it would not exist as nature; hence that maxim cannot obtain as a law of nature, and thus it wholly contradicts the supreme principle of all duty.^{xxx}

LS: Yes. Now you see the point which you must understand³⁴ and which Kant has made clear (although very insufficiently clear in this particular work), that this is an argument based on the typic and not on the categoric imperative proper. The key point is this: the man who makes this reflection is already prepared to obey the moral law. He³⁵ [is] still in the possession of his reason to that extent that he can ask himself. In other words, he has not become insane or almost insane through the sufferings.³⁶ He still can consult his conscience and, of course, he is *willing* to consult his conscience. That is the point. Otherwise, he would simply obey this maxim of his self-love.

And there is another point. The principle of self-love, that is a form of the principle of happiness. And it has a vagueness that is, [as]³⁷ Kant implies here, which the principle of

^{xxvi} Ibid., 39-40.

^{xxvii} Ibid., 40.

^{xxviii} Ibid.

^{xxix} Ibid.

^{xxx} Ibid.

happiness is. What does he really know here? That from now on he will have only evils or much more evils than good? That we cannot know. Life threatens evils and promises less pleasures. But he cannot know it. And therefore³⁸ what the moral reflection does is, in the first place, to make him distinguish between what he *knows* and what he believes to know. And as a sane civil man, he would of course not act merely on what he believes to know, but on what he knows. In other words, he cannot possibly know whether five minutes after he has committed suicide his presence there may be of the greatest value to other human beings, and therefore perhaps indirectly to himself because of the satisfaction he would derive from having helped fellow human beings. Take a single example. Now let us take the next example.

Mr. Reinken:

Another man finds himself forced by need to borrow money. He well knows that he will not be able to repay it, but he also sees that nothing will be loaned him if he does not firmly promise to repay it at a certain time. He desires to make such a promise—^{xxx}

LS: In other words, he is tempted. He is tempted. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “but he has enough conscience to ask himself—”^{xxxii}

LS: But he has *still* enough conscience, although the temptation is very great. So in other words,³⁹ these reflections which Kant sketches here are made only by men to the extent to which they are willing to consult their conscience. An unscrupulous crook would not even *begin* to make such reflections. This is the meaning, that this is the sphere of practical reason; these are not theoretical perceptions. Now, let us first finish this. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

He asks himself whether it is not improper and opposed to duty to relieve his distress in such a way. Now, assuming he does decide to do so, the maxim of his action would be as follows: When I believe myself to be in need of money—^{xxxiii}

LS: You see here also the qualifier, “When I *believe* to be in need of money.” How does he know that? Now you will say we know it very well. But that’s a question, no? Repeat again.

Mr. Reinken:

When I believe myself to be in need of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know I shall never do so.^{xxxiv}

LS: That he knows, whereas the first thing he believes. Yes? [Laughter]

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxii} Ibid.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

^{xxxiv} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

Now this principle of self-love or of his own benefit may very well be compatible with his whole future welfare, but the question—^{xxxv}

LS: No,⁴⁰ because we do not *know*, what will he . . . not? Here we cannot exclude that. Yes? “And now—”

Mr. Reinken: “the question is whether it is right. He changes—”^{xxxvi}

LS: No, no, Kant’s: “*I change.*” Kant⁴¹ doesn’t look at it from without. He looks at it from within. “*I change,*” therefore.

Mr. Reinken:

I change the pretension of self-love into a universal law and then put the question: How would it be if my maxim became a universal law? I immediately see—^{xxxvii}
Soon see?

LS: No no, “immediately.”

Mr. Reinken:

immediately see that it could never hold as a universal law of nature and be consistent with itself; rather it must necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law which says that anyone who believes himself to be in need could promise what he pleased with intention of not fulfilling it would make the promise itself and the end to be accomplished by it impossible; no one would believe what was promised to him but would only laugh at any such assertion as vain pretense.^{xxxviii}

LS: Yes. In other words, with such a law, I would will to deny the very purpose which my maxim presupposes. The maxim presupposes the purpose of getting money under false pretenses. But if I universalize the maxim, I see that I would deny the very purpose which my maxim presupposes. Here again, you see that the reflection liberates—and that is important—liberates from a delusion. From the delusion I mean that I know [myself] to be in need of money. Now, you will say that anyone who has ever suffered from lack of funds will say, Well I knew at that time that I was in need of money. But take it at a somewhat larger view: you may be—well, in the first place,⁴² sometimes we believe we need money because we wish to keep a certain standard of living; and that is not *true need* of money, when we have the alternative perfectly open to us, if we are honest: to cut out our standard of living.⁴³

But seeing it from a different point of view, granted that it is a situation in which money is needed according to the strictest conscience, what do I exclude if I say I must steal, or

^{xxxv} Ibid.

^{xxxvi} Ibid.

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} Ibid.

lie, or cheat? That I know, or believe to know, that I must not honestly beg. This is still open to me. Whether I will get the money which I desperately need for a decent purpose, I do not know; no beggar knows that. But that is still possible. And⁴⁴ most of us are prevented from considering that because we have a certain (from a moral point of view) foolish pride. That's no knowledge.

Now here, yes. Now⁴⁵ the same consideration applies⁴⁶ with a minor modification to the two last examples on the following two pages.

Mr. Reinken: "A third finds—"xxxix

LS: No, no, we⁴⁷ simply don't have the time. Let us read rather the paragraph following these examples.

Mr. Reinken:

The foregoing are a few of the many actual duties, or at least of duties we hold to be actual—^{xl}

LS: So in other words,⁴⁸ that is still a preliminary discussion. Kant does not necessarily say that these are duties in the strict sense. That will come out only when he comes to the *Metaphysics of Morals* proper, as distinguished from the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

whose derivation from the one stated principle is clear. We must be able to will that a maxim of our action become a universal law; this is the canon of the moral estimation of our action generally.^{xli}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So⁴⁹ in the sequel Kant explains (as I think this we discussed already that time) that when we as conscientious people, as not completely crooked people, when we transgress our duty we make this compromise, this deal: only this time, or only—i.e., we know it is an exception, and this exception is precisely what contradicts the universality of the moral law.

One can also say: Could a crook not will these immoral actions or maxims? Or rather: Could a crook not will that a maxim of his action be a universal law? Well, I would say a crook would not dream of willing it. The thought, as it were, would not occur to him, for then he would already consult his conscience and then he would no longer be simply a crook. Or are there men who are crooks on principle? [Students chuckle] That would be—no, but⁵⁰ if there are crooks from principle who say: I ought to be a crook, and therefore I am a crook, then Kant would say his principle is self-contradictory. But I have forgotten about Mr. Schaeffer.

xxxix Ibid.

xl Ibid., 41.

xli Ibid.

Mr. Schaeffer: I wanted to ask, does not Kant believe that by making clear the nature of morality he will induce more crooks to consult their conscience? For instance, this footnote in which someone has sent him a letter asking why moral education isn't doing better—

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Schaeffer: In a footnote in the *Foundations*, somebody wrote him a letter and asked him why moral education isn't working better, and he said that if teachers had their ideas straight they would be able to persuade more people to be moral. So does not he intend that this morality will not only make clear to people who consult their conscience what they ought to do but will induce more people to consult their conscience, even crooks?

LS: Ya. No,⁵¹ what Kant has in mind is this (there is a passage about that): that if people do not take the moral law in the strictest possible sense in which Kant means it and have all kinds of recommendations to it from ulterior motives, that really leads to a weakening of the moral fibers . . . and therefore it is much better to state the morality strictly and firmly on its true principles⁵² to get more people⁵³ [of] true character, of moral fiber. That is what he has in mind, and not to convince the crooks as crooks.

Now there is another point on page 424 towards the end,⁵⁴ when Kant uses the word "impartial."⁵⁵ "Our own impartial judgment."⁵⁶

Mr. Reinken: Right. 424, bottom. 42 towards the bottom in the LLA.

LS: Ya. Now impartial, meaning an impartial judgment, which would of course have to be a judgment⁵⁷ which we respect. Is a judgment not dictated by inclinations alone?⁵⁸ A judgment dictated by inclinations alone would precisely be a partial judgment, and what we seek in such matters is an impartial judgment.

In the sequel on page 425 Kant⁵⁹ makes again clear that the moral law must not be derived from any peculiarity of human nature, which is implied in what we have said before. But⁶⁰ there is one point which we should read. The paragraph beginning⁶¹ "here."⁶²

Mr. Reinken:

Here we see philosophy brought to what is, in fact, a precarious position, which should be made fast even though it is supported by nothing in either heaven or earth.^{xlii}

LS: In other words,⁶³ that is truly an absolute principle, a principle which has *no support* in anything because it cannot be reduced to anything else. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{xlii} Ibid., 43.

Here philosophy must show its purity as the absolute sustainer of its laws, and not as the herald of those which an implanted sense—^{xliii}

LS: Meaning, like the moral sense of which some English philosophers like Hutcheson^{xliv} and so spoke. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to it. Those may be better than no laws at all, but they can never afford fundamental principles, which reason alone dictates. These fundamental principles must originate entirely *a priori* and thereby obtain their commanding authority; they can expect nothing from the inclination of men but everything from the supremacy of the law and due respect for it. Otherwise they condemn man to self-contempt and inner abhorrence.^{xlvi}

LS: Ya,⁶⁴ I mean that is a very powerful and impressive statement, but what I am now concerned with is only this, when he speaks here of “who knows what tutelary nature.” And this is a very clear statement of the principle of Kant which distinguishes him⁶⁵ from all earlier philosophers. The break with the classical tradition, the traditional view was that the foundation of morality is the nature of man or, what is the same thing, the natural ends of man: this is simply rejected by Kant. We have to take the *full responsibility* for our action and for the *principles* of our action, and we cannot delegate this responsibility to nature.

Now this word “tutelage of nature,” or a very close parallel to it, occurs in a well-known passage in the Preface to the second edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Now, second edition.

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: Begin here. Now listen carefully. Kant speaks here of the genesis of modern physics which, in a way, is a model for Kant’s own philosophical teaching. But we read only a part of it. “When Galileo.”

Mr. Reinken:

When Galileo caused balls, the weights of which he had himself previously determined, to roll down an inclined plane; when Torricelli made the air carry a weight which he had calculated beforehand to be equal to that of a definite volume of water—^{xlvi}

LS: You see, with previous calculations in both cases. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{xliii} Ibid.

^{xliv} Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), one of the key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment.

^{xlvi} Ibid., 43-44.

^{xlvi} Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxii.

or in more recent times, when Stahl changed metals into oxides, and oxides back into metal, by withdrawing something and then restoring it, a light broke upon all students of nature. They learned that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own—^{xlvi}

LS: Ya, “after a project of its own.” So the project precedes the experiment.⁶⁶ Kant . . . doesn’t say “a question,” but he says, “a project.” Or as⁶⁷ [Norman Kemp Smith] translates it, “plan.” This project precedes all possible experiments and the experiment is only the answer confirming or disconfirming the project. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

and that it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature’s leading-strings, but must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason’s own determining. Accidental observations, made in obedience to no previously thought-out plan—^{xlvi}

LS: “Previously projected plan.” Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

can never be made to yield a necessary law, which alone reason is concerned to discover.^{xlvi}

LS: Yes. See, here in this crucial passage he again speaks⁶⁸ of the “apron strings” or what does he say here? The apron strings?

Student: Oh . . .

Mr. Reinken: The “leading-strings.”

LS: The “leading-strings” is almost the same as apron strings of nature. This liberation from the leading-strings of nature which was underlying, as Kant knew, the whole development of modern thought and in particular of modern science, is in a way brought to its culmination in Kant’s philosophy.

Well,⁶⁹ originally we had heard such formulae as, “man should make himself the master and owner of nature,” not to be led by the leading-strings of nature: the opposite.⁷⁰ Science for the sake of power or, “We know or understand only what we make,” as Hobbes put it, and as Vico repeated it. And the final result of this development, which we see only in our days, clearly already foreshadowed in Nietzsche (as we have seen the last quarter), that the very concept of nature loses its evidence or meaning which it has had throughout the ages. So at any rate, for Kant’s moral philosophy, this is decisive. The

^{xlvi} Ibid., Bxii-xiii.

^{xlvi} Ibid., Bxiii.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

principles of morality cannot be found in nature, whether nature is understood in the Aristotelian or in the Newtonian sense, does not make any difference.

Now Kant introduces then in the sequel another formula for the categorical imperative. In this case it is not quite clear, not as clear as in the former case, whether this is a type of the moral law, or of equal rank as the primary formulation of it.⁷¹ Read only the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The question then is: Is it a necessary law for all rational beings that they should always judge their actions by such maxims as they themselves could will to serve as universal laws? If it is such a law—¹

LS: Kant leaves . . . yes? What Kant did hitherto was only to say, “If we analyze what men ordinarily understand by morality, we reach the conclusion that they presuppose a categorical imperative.” But there is still the question of what is ordinarily understood by “morality” is not altogether an illusion; and of this difficulty he tries to dispose in the third section, which we will discuss next time. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

If it is such a law, it must be connected (wholly *a priori*) with the concept of the will of a rational being as such.^{li}

LS: Now let us stop here and go over to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The will is thought of as a faculty of determining itself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws. Such a faculty can be found only in rational beings. That which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is an end, and, if it is given by reason alone, it must hold alike for all rational beings.^{lii}

LS: Because otherwise it would not be universally valid and necessary⁷² and therefore it would not be equally valid for all rational beings. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

On the other hand, that which contains the ground of the possibility of the action, whose result is an end, is called the means.^{liii}

LS: Next paragraph.⁷³ “Assuming—”

Mr. Reinken:

¹ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 44.

^{li} Ibid.

^{lii} Ibid., 45.

^{liii} Ibid.

But suppose that there were something the existence of which in itself had absolute worth, something which, as an end in itself, could be a ground of definite laws. In it and only in it could lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, i.e. of a practical law.^{liv}

LS: Skip the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Thus if there is to be a supreme practical principle and a categorical imperative for the human will, it must be one that forms an objective principle of the will from the conception of that which is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself. Hence this objective principle can serve as a universal practical law. The ground—^{lv}

LS: You see, “can” which seems to indicate again that this is a type and not the moral law proper. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

The ground of this principle is: rational nature exists as an end in itself. Man necessarily thinks of his own existence in this way—^{lvi}

LS: In other words, he does it prior to any morality. This egocentrism belongs to man necessarily. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “thus far it is a subjective principle of human actions. Also—”^{lvii}

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

every other rational being thinks of his existence by means of the same rational ground which holds also for myself; thus it is at the same time an objective principle from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws of the will. The practical imperative, therefore, is the following: Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as—^{lviii}

LS: No, no. “Always *also* as an end.” Also as an end. “And never a *mere* means—”

Mr. Reinken: “as a means only.”^{lix}

^{liv} Ibid., 46.

^{lv} Ibid., 47.

^{lvi} Ibid.

^{lvii} Ibid.

^{lviii} Ibid.

^{lix} Ibid.

LS: Ya, let us stop here. Now this is one of the most famous formulations of Kant on which much later thought, moral thought, is derived. Humanity here means not the human race but means the essence of man: *humanitas*, *essentia hominis*, and not *species*, *genus hominum*. So respect the human in man, man's human essence, in thy person as well as in the person of everybody else, always *also* as an end and not merely as a means. In other words, we cannot help using other human beings as means. When we go to a store and buy an orange, you use him as a means for getting your orange. But you can't help that in many other ways, but you must never use him *merely* as a means. And the same applies to you: to some extent you may use yourself as a means, but you may never use your . . . as a means.⁷⁴ Of course, from the basis of the biblical tradition (although the Bible does not use this formula) this is not altogether a surprise, but if we look at the most powerful tradition preceding Kant in modern times, it looks different.

By the way, in Aristotle of course the great question is: What about the slave in Aristotle's teaching? Is he not used merely as a means? I think Aristotle would say no, because what he calls a natural slave is⁷⁵ treated as a slave, and is made a slave for his own good, too. Only the trouble is that when Aristotle comes to speak of slaves in more practical terms they are not these touching idiots of whom I spoke at the beginning, but they are obviously human beings, who ought not to be treated thus—so Aristotle is not, and Plato still less, is very far from Kant.

But I read to you a passage from Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, paragraph 11. Now when he says:

Every man, in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from doing the like injury, which no reparation can compensate, by the example of the punishment that attends it from every body, and also to secure men from the attempts of a criminal, who having renounced reason, the common rule and measure God hath given to mankind, hath, by the unjust violence and slaughter he hath committed upon one, declared war against all mankind, and therefore may be destroyed as a lion or a tyger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security.

In other words, you hit him over the head until he is dead, just as you would do in the case of a lion or a tiger. That is here radically denied by Kant. Under no circumstances can you conceive in particular of capital punishment, which Kant accepts as legitimate, in terms of this.⁷⁶ If capital punishment is not compatible with respecting every man, the man to be punished capitally as an end in himself, then it is immoral.

Now we don't have so much time. Let us turn a bit further on to page 431.

Student: But isn't—

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Isn't the point there in Locke that that man is no longer a man? I mean, he no longer has the essential nature of humanity.

LS: Ya. But then, yes and no. Kant would say you cannot renounce it. Well, there would be the case of insanity, and then he is really no longer a rational being and that is a moot question. But if you think only of what the Nazis did with insane people and how it was viewed upon by all non-Nazis⁷⁷, ya? You know what they did and then you see that there is a difficulty even here: whether even in a human being who has become insane one should not respect, as it were, the reflection of a former sanity—to say nothing of the fact, of which we are reminded by Kant, that we cannot tell. The man may regain his sanity even if all psychiatrists tell us he can't, because psychiatrists are not omniscient and there are always exceptions to rules.

Now we have to read something on page 431.⁷⁸ Let us read only the second half of this paragraph.^{79lx}

Mr. Reinken: First paragraph.

Objectively the ground of all practical legislation lies (according to the first principle) in the rule and in the form of universality, which makes it capable of being a law (at most a natural law); subjectively, it lies in the end. But the subject of all ends is every rational being as an end in itself (by the second principle); from this there follows the third practical principle of the will as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, viz., the idea of the will of every rational being as making universal law.^{lxi}

LS: No, literally, “as a will legislating universally.” Now this is what Kant calls in the sequel “autonomy,” “self-legislation.” Every rational being, and therefore in particular man, is moral only to the extent to which he is autonomous. Now what does this mean? Autonomy is used in contradistinction to heteronomy, that someone else imposes this law. And needless to say that not only divine laws,⁸⁰ which are imposed by God on man, and man not being also legislating, and laws based on nature, moral laws in the traditional sense, imply heteronomy.⁸¹

There are some people today, I have been given to understand, who make the distinction between “self-directed” and “other-directed.”^{lxii} That is descendant from Kant's distinction between autonomy and heteronomy. And “tradition-directed,” which is the third kind of direction these people speak of, is of course also heteronomy, because when tradition directs you, you do not direct yourself.⁸² That is frequently misunderstood. And Kant makes this clear in a later writing, *The Metaphysics of Morals* itself. Now autonomy as Kant understands it means self-compulsion. The word “compulsion” did occur, but translated sometimes as “necessitation” and so on. “Compulsion” is a much better translation.

^{lx} There is some confusion about the passage that Strauss wants Mr. Reinken to read; the several lines of the transcript in which this is addressed have been deleted.

^{lxi} Ibid., 49.

^{lxii} David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950).

Now what does this mean?⁸³ It is a principle of great practical importance. We all hear all the time of compulsion exerted, say, in concentration camps, prisoners of war camps, and brainwashing and this kind of thing. Now Kant makes this point: another being can compel me to *do* something⁸⁴ which is not my purpose, for example, to crawl on my belly, or still more terrible things. But another being can never compel me to make this particular thing, say, crawling on my belly, my *purpose*. For if he compels me to do something which I do not like to do, my purpose in giving in to the compulsion is to escape death, torture, etc., etc., whereas his purpose is to extract information or to humiliate me or so. No one can ever compel a man—that's Kant's key point⁸⁵—to make what he wills *his* purpose. That can only be an act of the agent.⁸⁶ Therefore, even if God would command us something,⁸⁷ God could not strictly speaking compel us to do it.⁸⁸ It would have to become *our* act, our purpose; and this purpose is not subject to compulsion.

Now let us read on page 432, the first paragraph. "For if we think such a will, namely a will legislating universally—" ⁸⁹

Mr. Reinken:⁹⁰

But if we think of a will giving universal laws, we find that a supreme legislating will cannot possibly depend on any interest, for such a dependent will would itself need still another law which would restrict the interest of its self-love to the condition that [the maxims of this will] should be valid as universal law.

Thus the principle of every human will as a will giving universal laws in all its maxims—^{lxiii}

LS: "Through all its maxims." That is very important, because the maxims come necessarily first, and⁹¹ the maxim must be capable to become a principle of a universal legislation. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

is very well adapted to being a categorical imperative, provided it is otherwise correct. Because of the idea of universal lawgiving, it is based on no interest—^{lxiv}

LS:⁹² Let us stop here. Namely, like that interest which I have to give in to that torturer or murderer in a concentration or prisoner of war camp. The interest I have is to escape from the torturer, etc. But⁹³ an action can only be mine and can be genuine if the purpose originates in me without such a previous interest, i.e., in obedience to the moral law. Now in the sequel, yes?

Student: Does that mean that anyone who does anything under orders therefore would not be morally responsible? Anyone that does anything under an order is not morally responsible—

^{lxiii} Ibid., 50.

^{lxiv} Ibid.

LS: It all depends if [the] orderer, if the man who orders him is his legitimate superior, and if the order which he gives to him is not flagrantly immoral. Of course he has to obey—I mean, take a very simple case, which of course I know is today controversial. But if there is a war and a man is ordered to kill others, this is of course, for Kant (and as for almost all earlier moralists) not a problem. You know? Because the biblical command (you know Hebrew) is not “Thou shalt not kill,” but “Thou shalt not murder.” Because how could the Old Testament forbid killing, since it commands killing all the time, ya? . . . but apart from biblical authority that was generally understood. Killing is not as such an evil act; murdering is. And the question is how to draw a line, therefore there was no problem.

But if it is a matter of for example of killing, say, non-fighting personnel, women and children especially, then it was understood since the seventeenth century [that] that is immoral. But now since⁹⁴ that great technological progress, where people can no longer distinguish when they fly between women and children or soldiers, it's a hard proposition. Ya?

Same Student: What if you are ordered to kill someone and if you do not kill that person you will be killed?

LS: Ya, that is one of these extreme cases where one simply should not pronounce unless one has gone through such a situation,⁹⁵ and then one would probably not be able to speak about it anymore. [Laughter]

Student: This talking about killing as opposed to murdering—

LS: As distinguished from your orders. Ya?

Same Student: . . . because of Kant saying that we can't use empirical grounds for the moral imperative. And it seems to me that in defining actions like killing, in contradistinction to murdering, you have to use empirical—

LS: Ya, but⁹⁶ we cannot decide it here, on the basis of this writing, whether the distinction as meant by Kant is based on empirical consideration⁹⁷ as distinguished from using empirical illustrations, which is a different story. In other words, whether this distinction does not have an *a priori* principle. We will find some matter to base a judgment when we come to his more specific political writings.

Let me only mention one point which is very crucial in the sequel of the second part.⁹⁸ What Kant has stated here in the passage we have read, is the dignity of man: man alone is an end in himself. Now the question here arises:⁹⁹ Is the dignity of man dependent on his being *actually* moral? And then that would¹⁰⁰ come close to what Aristotle and quite a few other ancient philosophers have said. Or does it depend on his *possibility*, potentiality, to be moral? Kant means the latter, but it is not always clear.¹⁰¹

Kant makes clear¹⁰² in this connection, on page 432 to [43]3 that all previous ethics differs from Kant precisely regarding [LS taps on the table] this point,¹⁰³ which he calls the principle of autonomy, of self-legislation. Every action¹⁰⁴ which is not based on my own self-legislation is to that extent immoral. It may still be according to duty, but it is not in the true spirit of duty.

Towards the end of this section in page 439 bottom,¹⁰⁵ the last paragraph on page 439, read the beginning of that.

Mr. Reinken:

From what has just been said, it can easily be explained how it happens that, although in the concept of duty we think of subjection to law, we do—^{lxv}

LS: “Subjection,” obviously. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

we do nevertheless ascribe a certain sublimity and dignity to the person who fulfills all his duties.^{lxvi}

LS: Yes. You see here, if he fulfills his duties. The question is: What about the man who does not fulfill all his duties? What is the dignity of man in this case? As I said before, Kant doubtless means the latter, yes? He means by dignity of man the latter, because otherwise it would be very difficult, since we cannot know of any man, as we have heard, whether he ever fulfilled a duty. Although he may externally have done his duties, we can never know whether he did it in the proper moral spirit. So if the dignity of man would depend entirely on something which we cannot possibly know in any case, then it would¹⁰⁶ rest on a very poor basis, an inadequate basis. Yes. I think we leave it at that.

¹ Deleted “we cannot....”

² Deleted “we....”

³ Deleted “In....”

⁴ Deleted “the present....”

⁵ Deleted “the....”

⁶ Deleted “these ends....”

⁷ Deleted “we....”

⁸ Deleted “It is....”

⁹ Deleted “that....”

¹⁰ Deleted “Kant stands....”

¹¹ Deleted “The theoretical....”

¹² Deleted “then....”

¹³ Deleted “as is sufficiently....”

¹⁴ Deleted “there is no....”

¹⁵ Deleted “for which....”

¹⁶ Deleted “in....”

¹⁷ Deleted “where did I find it? Are there any...any numbers?”

¹⁸ Deleted “the initiative....”

¹⁹ Deleted “to....”

^{lxv} Ibid., 58.

^{lxvi} Ibid.

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- 20 Deleted "point...."
 21 Deleted "the...."
 22 Deleted "you...."
 23 Deleted "make it...a possible...."
 24 Deleted "there are."
 25 Deleted "it means...."
 26 Deleted "now"
 27 Deleted "turn...."
 28 Deleted "where we...."
 29 Deleted "'For since....'"
 30 Deleted "is it paragraph...."
 31 Deleted "of laws...of the...."
 32 Deleted "There is."
 33 Reinken omits "to himself."
 34 Deleted "is the...."
 35 Deleted "still has sufficiently...."
 36 Deleted "He can still...."
 37 Deleted "what."
 38 Deleted "it...what the action...."
 39 Deleted "that this...."
 40 Deleted "that...."
 41 Deleted "is....in...he."
 42 Deleted "we know...."
 43 Deleted "But the other...."
 44 Deleted "we of course...."
 45 Deleted "in."
 46 Deleted "to the...apply."
 47 Deleted "cannot...we have...."
 48 Deleted "Kant is not even...."
 49 Deleted "And here is...."
 50 Deleted "then Kant would say their principle would be...."
 51 Deleted "what Kant has in mind...no I don't...."
 52 Deleted "for the...."
 53 Deleted "with...."
 54 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'When—' **LS:** 'Then—' no, no."
 55 Deleted "Yeah, impartial, shortly before the end. **Reinken:** Here's, oh this—"
 56 Deleted "No, only the word...that's on page—"
 57 Deleted "which we have...."
 58 Deleted "Dictated...."
 59 Deleted "still make...."
 60 Deleted "let us...."
 61 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'View to attain—'? **LS:** No."
 62 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'Here—' **LS:** [inaudible words]."
 63 Deleted "there isn't...."
 64 Deleted "so the point...."
 65 Deleted "from all earlier...from almost...."
 66 Deleted "The...the project is not simple...."
 67 Deleted "he."
 68 Deleted "of reason...."
 69 Deleted "and such...."
 70 Deleted "Man should be...or."
 71 Deleted "Now we cannot possibly read...."
 72 Deleted "and hence...."
 73 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'The subject—' **LS:** No, the next paragraph."
 74 Deleted "Now in order to see...."

⁷⁵ Deleted “used for...I mean.”

⁷⁶ Deleted “It must...must be...”

⁷⁷ Deleted “that is...”

⁷⁸ Deleted “The second— **Reinken**: ‘By this principle all maxims—’ **LS**: Yeah.”

⁷⁹ Deleted “**Reinken**: ‘The will is thus not only subject to the law but subject in such a way that it must be regarded also as self-legislative and only for this reason as being subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author). In the foregoing mode of conception, in which imperatives are conceived universally either as conformity to law by actions—a conformity which is similar to a natural order—’ **LS**: No, let me see here. Can I have yours? 431. 431. Where does it begin? Oh, this one here. **Reinken**: ‘I have begun—’ **LS**: This [inaudible words] **Reinken**: ‘Thus this principle must—’? **LS**: Yeah, begin here [inaudible word].”

⁸⁰ Deleted “meaning...”

⁸¹ Deleted “In...”

⁸² Deleted “Now what is the reason...”

⁸³ Deleted “And this is very...”

⁸⁴ Deleted “that is not...that...to do.”

⁸⁵ Deleted “to accept what he...”

⁸⁶ Deleted “And this is...”

⁸⁷ Deleted “it...”

⁸⁸ Deleted “He...”

⁸⁹ Deleted “**Reinken**: [inaudible words] The principle of every will...432...changes in the middle...oh second paragraph. 432... **LS**: I don’t know. Oh, here. **Reinken**: [inaudible words] ‘But if we think of a will giving—’ **LS**: No.”

⁹⁰ Deleted “Ah, paragraphing not clear. [inaudible words].”

⁹¹ Deleted “you...”

⁹² Deleted “Namely, like...”

⁹³ Deleted “here I have to have...if an action is to be...”

⁹⁴ Deleted “our...”

⁹⁵ Deleted “and has...”

⁹⁶ Deleted “see...but the question is we would have to...”

⁹⁷ Deleted “and not...and...”

⁹⁸ Deleted “Kant...”

⁹⁹ Deleted “Does...”

¹⁰⁰ Deleted “be...”

¹⁰¹ Deleted “In...”

¹⁰² Deleted “on...”

¹⁰³ Deleted “what...”

¹⁰⁴ Deleted “which is based...”

¹⁰⁵ Deleted “Kant...”

¹⁰⁶ Deleted “be...”

Session 8: April 27, 1967

Leo Strauss: [in progress] —to look at . . . all of you have written the papers on the third section of the *Foundations* had this difficult task of course, but you did it very well. And now¹ let us see. I'm sure that those who have not read the third section, and even some who have read it, will have had great difficulties in following your very good summary and presentation of Kant's point.

Now² where do we stand at the end of the preceding section or, in other words, what is the function of this last section? The last section being undoubtedly the most difficult part of the whole work. Kant has given, in the first two sections, an analysis of what³ everyone who has ever had the feeling of doing wrong or willing something wrong [and] what is implied in that. And Kant claims he has made clear this implication better and more adequately than any earlier philosopher, and the formulation is the categorical imperative: there is such a moral law which commands in this categorical manner without having any content as such, yet necessarily leading us to moral contents.

But Kant has not proven that this may not be a completely chimeric thing. In other words, that this is so, men judge morally, and if we understand this moral judgment, if we take it seriously, we are led to the categorical imperative. But in fact, what happened might be some father image, you know, which has become sublimated so that it is only duty, intelligible duty and no longer any father figure (you must have [a] further expression)⁴ or anything else. So in other words, the most important question, is morality something real, is not yet answered at all until we come to the last twenty pages.

And what Kant does there is called by him a derivation of morality: a derivation, meaning from something more fundamental. And there is a great difficulty here, because if the categorical imperative is unconditioned, how can it be derived from anything else? And therefore the solution which Kant found a few years later in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, namely, that the moral imperative, the categorical imperative is a *fact* of reason, *the* fact of pure reason. A fact irreducible to anything else. We could not possibly figure it out that there is such a thing if we were not confronted by it, or in more present-day English, if we did not experience it, that it is there. This is a much clearer position than the one taken here. But how hard it was to arrive at that one sees from the fact that Kant was seeking for such a thing for a decade and more, and such a mind arrived originally only on this very inadequate statement in the *Foundations*, section 3.⁵

But precisely because⁶ the . . . of such a mind sees⁷ the alternative with which Kant, as it were, played for some time, and finally admitting that they led nowhere . . . Now what would a derivation of the moral law from something else mean? What is the ethical doctrine, the pre-Kantian ethical doctrine which Kant respected most? Yes?

Student: The rationalist⁸ doctrine which derives the Christian morality from the ontological concept of perfection.

LS: Perfection, ya, perfection.⁹ And of course perfection means here the perfection of man's nature. So¹⁰ our moral knowledge as knowledge would be based on our knowledge of human nature, and secondly, on our knowledge of what *perfection* is. Both things are theoretical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge. So moral knowledge would rest on [LS taps the table] theoretical foundations. And that is, I think, also a very common view among philosophers of earlier times, and Kant was the one who questioned¹¹ this view most radically.

Now¹² to look back for one moment at Aristotle in the *Ethics*, that is one of the greatest difficulties of the *Ethics*. If you raise the question: What is the cognitive status of the moral principles? you do not get a clear answer. In a way, you do not get an answer. They are presupposed in¹³ every prudential consideration, every deliberation. The ends, the good ends, the noble ends, must have come to sight to you, otherwise¹⁴ your deliberation will be sly, cunning, and not prudent. But Aristotle makes also clear how¹⁵ these men acquire these principles, namely, by good breeding. But of course this is not a sufficient explanation, because who bred the breeders? And therefore there must be something higher,¹⁶ in other words or, differently stated: How can we distinguish between good breeding and bad breeding?¹⁷ Our question is not answered, perhaps; at least not explicitly.

Now if we look at the nature of man¹⁸ and ask Aristotle: What do you think is the nature of man? And we all know what that answer is. In the traditional formula: <an is a rational animal. And of course the morality will be located primarily and essentially in his rationality and not in his general animality, because we assume that animals other than man are not moral although they can be very nice.¹⁹ So reason, rationality, is his answer. Therefore one could expect that what Kant is trying to do is to derive the categorical imperative, the principle of morality, from man's being rational.²⁰ Do you agree with this . . . meaning rational without yet making a distinction between theoretical and practical.²¹ And there are traces of that in Kant's argument.²² Kant accepts the Aristotelian view of man, but he understands reason in a different way than Kant does. And²³ when we look at our reason and analyze it, when we analyze our knowledge and separate out the rational element, we see the reason or understanding is active whereas the other ingredient of knowledge, sensuality, is receptive, passive.

And so there is then something like a pointer between the activity of reason as reason, meaning of theoretical reason, and action. Even in the purely theoretical reason, in the activities of theoretical reason, we are active and not receptive. Kant speaks here of the spontaneity of reason; and there is a link, hinted at by Aristotle in the *Ethics*, between spontaneity and freedom, freedom in the moral sense. Something of this is shining through this point, but Kant does not follow this through, and he is satisfied with if he can deduce the moral law from the will or, what is the same thing for him, from practical reason. Are we still in agreement? Good.²⁴

Now I would like to let you restate in your own words what the character of that deduction is. So we don't know yet anything of the categorical imperative; we know only that man is free. That we know.

Student: No. No, you can't know positively that man is free. It is a necessary assumption that you have to make in order to act.

LS: I really don't know that. Then it could still be the father figure behind the categorical imperative.

Same Student: Yeah. The argument is so elaborate that he's got in there. That's the section where he asserts that moral law is valid regardless of whether you know yourself to be free or whether you merely have to assume that you are free.

LS: Ya,²⁵ that is difficult. And what is the conclusion which you have drawn, if you disregard the improvements given in *The Critique of Practical Reason*?

Same Student: I think that the whole thing just falls through. [Laughter] I—

LS: Also in *The Critique*²⁶ of *Practical Reason*?

Same Student: No, no, no. Just in the *Foundations*.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: The idea of trying to deduce the categorical imperative as the supreme principle of morality from the idea of freedom seems to be, well, as he himself admits in *Practical Reason*, is the wrong way to go about it.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: It is an inversion of the proper order. It should be the other way around. It should be—

LS: Now, but to come to the more specific point: Kant is trying to deduce²⁷ the categorical imperative from the distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal worlds. Can you state the character of this deduction? So in other words, we know that there is a noumenal world.

Same Student: Now this is something that puzzles me.²⁸ There are certain passages where he wants to say in here that we do know that there is an intelligible or noumenal world. But then, on the other hand, there are certain passages where he says: no we don't. We have to assume it. We have to presuppose it. But we have no definite knowledge of it.

LS: Ya, but Kant makes a distinction, however, in *The Critique of Pure Reason* between—well, how should I say, between—

Same Student: An idea?

LS: *Denken* and *erkennen*.

Same Student: Is that idea—?

LS: No, between thinking and knowing. We must think.

Same Student: Yeah. We must think, then.

LS: We must think that there is a noumenal world, but we cannot know it. How can one state this in idiomatic English, the distinction? We must conceive of a noumenal world, otherwise, we get into hopeless troubles. But this²⁹ remains a question mark.³⁰ The noumenal world is, but we cannot know more than that it is.

Same Student: Yeah, that's true.

LS:³¹ There is, however, some suspicion that it is peopled by intellectual beings, intelligent beings, and not by atoms or any of this kind,³² by an argument which is not very impressive but which is part of the Leibnizian and other traditions which Kant follows here. So there are really great difficulties here.

But one can see, of course, also the difficulty in another point.³³ I come back to my drawing . . . [LS writes on the blackboard]. Some thief has been here, I think. [Laughter] . . . what he left us. So that is all right.

Student: . . . robbed.

LS: So here is this action, and this action is fully determined on the phenomenal level, ya? By preceding causes going back³⁴ indefinitely. Here [LS refers to diagram]. Fully.

Student: Can you start from the beginning?

LS: No. [Laughter] You should be attentive. This is the action and it is fully determined by preceding causes. Someone steals money because he is hungry and bad breeding, [laughter] and . . . and the backbreaking, and so on and so on. And of course, the availability of something to steal. So³⁵ you can easily analyze it.³⁶ So there is no place for morality here, because your actions are fully determined by preceding causes. And of course, if you act nicely maybe there will be fear of punishment, or desire for reward, for respectability, or whatever. So this is strictly amoral.

But yet the same action is also fully determined from above, from the noumenal world, from the intellectual world. Cudworth's, the English . . . is from the book *The Intellectual World*, that has something to do with it.ⁱ And shows also that earlier on . . . was a Platonist. Good. And Kant says we must make this distinction. And this argument is of

ⁱ Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688), Cambridge Platonist. The full title of the work Strauss refers to is *The True Intellectual System of the Universe, Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated* (1678).

course here not given but only referred to because, let us assume for one moment that this “scientific” (as it would now be called)³⁷ explanation of actions were possible, and that the law of causality (however specifically interpreted) were universally valid and in every respect, and that was the last word. Then we would get into the [LS taps on the table] antinomy, the third antinomy,ⁱⁱ [which can be observed only by the soul], which tells us that³⁸ causal explanation is the only explanation which we can give of experienced facts as experienced facts. But it is only an explanation of the phenomenal, not of the noumenal. This distinction is implied; otherwise, you get into the third antinomy.

Now here is one difficulty . . . this stage. Let’s assume that we have a decent action. What should it be? A teller in a bank who refuses to be frightened by the robber, ya? Good. And risks her life. Good. Now, so we have also to explain that. But since³⁹ we assume that it is clearly a moral action, the explanation in terms of background and stamina and so will not do, because it would not do justice to what is moral in the action. So in other words, the moral or, for that matter, the immoral in the action cannot be explained causally.⁴⁰ Kant goes too far when he says that it is the same action, same phenomenon. It is not the same phenomenon. We abstract from the moral core, which means, of course, its either being moral or being immoral, and then we explain it. We take⁴¹ a world act without anything else and then that is of course all our present day social science claims to explain. Is this not true? Good.

So this distinction is . . . and⁴² very few people today are Kantians, and this difficulty has had something to do with it. And many people who were Kantians, say around 1900, especially in Germany but not only in Germany, were *neo*-Kantians, which meant they abandoned the thing in itself, the noumenal world, in the way in which Kant himself had understood it.

Mr. Paton—Paton or Paton?⁴³ⁱⁱⁱ

Student: I don’t know. I would call him Paton.⁴⁴

LS: Ya, Paton⁴⁵—which reminds us of the General.^{iv} Mr. Paton, who is an Englishman, has written a very respectable book called *The Categorical Imperative*.^v At least it’s the only one which I have read.⁴⁶ But he tries to get out of the difficulties by saying [that] Kant’s ethics is fine, but his metaphysics is the deplorable.⁴⁷ But I would say that I don’t believe it can be so simple. Kant was unable to set forth his ethical teachings without these borrowings from the metaphysics which he, in his theoretical writings, had claimed to have destroyed.

But I would like only to tell those of you who are repelled by this scholasticism, as some people call it, or some people would want to say a certain German heaviness [laughter], I

ⁱⁱ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B472-3.

ⁱⁱⁱ The question concerns whether the “a” in Paton is short or long.

^{iv} General George S. Patton.

^v H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1971).

would say that is not a sufficient excuse for anyone who tries to understand our world,⁴⁸ the modern world, because Kant is there one of the greatest landmarks—and especially today, where the only alternative on the academic level, for all practical purposes at least, to social science positivism or related things, linguistic analysis, is what is called existentialism. This existentialism was in very important respects a return to Kant—of course, not to the letter as Kant understood it, literally understood it, but in the denial of the sovereignty of theoretical reason. That is the point at which Kant is aiming.⁴⁹ The highest principle of which we can be aware, which we can know, is the categorical imperative. As far as the phenomena in the visible world are concerned, all this knowledge is relative and contingent, of course—good enough as far as it goes, but subject to contradiction and so on and so on. It is never satisfactory.

The only unconditioned knowledge, the only knowledge of the unconditioned—of the absolute as it was then called—is the knowledge of the moral law. And the moral law, that is as it were like a lightning in a very dark night. But⁵⁰ I must mix metaphors; it must be a lightning always accessible, so say a permanent lightning (at least if we are willing to look up, otherwise we wouldn't see it) in an otherwise absolutely dark sky. What its grounds are—that is fundamentally what he is concerned with, what its grounds are—we cannot know. We cannot know; we can have some guesses that it will be a sign of the intelligible, intellectual world, to which we and other rational intellectual beings in the universe belong, but that we do not know.

And therefore⁵¹ no theoretical knowledge can be the *basis* of our understanding and obeying the moral law. This is what Kant is trying at, and existentialism⁵²—which arose from a reaction⁵³ to post-Kantian philosophy, especially by Kierkegaard—can be said to be the view that formally the highest principles are not subjects of theoretical, and cannot be subjects of theoretical knowledge. In this crucial point they agree.

Of course the situation is greatly, radically different because for Kant natural science, Newtonian science, has canonic character. That is human knowledge of the first order, whereas for existentialism, at least in the radical form which Heidegger has given to it,⁵⁴ what we now call scientific knowledge is derivative⁵⁵ from the fundamental way of knowing things which one can call everyday knowledge: everyday knowledge as distinguished from scientific knowledge.

Now therefore, since everyday knowledge takes it for granted that man is free—therefore the whole conflict presented in Kant's third antinomy doesn't arise. That you have a strictly deterministic world which does not leave room for freedom—this problem doesn't arise, number one. And then, when it comes to the analysis of morality, the distinction made originally by Heidegger between authentic and unauthentic being, that takes the place of the Kantian distinction between autonomous and heteronomous being. I cannot go into these points but I thought I should at least mention them, lest you see no immediate relevance of what Kant says to the question which confronts us today immediately. This is of course not to say that a question, in order to be sensible, must be one which confronts us immediately, but we always have to start from what is nearest to

us, as Aristotle in his wisdom said, and what is nearest to us is what is in the foreground of attention in the late twentieth century.

Now the first thing I think which we should do is this: to read the passage in⁵⁶ *The Critique of Practical Reason*,⁵⁷ in which Kant⁵⁸ makes his decisive corrections. And that is⁵⁹ the note to paragraph 7. Well, you can also read the heading, you can read paragraph 7 itself.

Mr. Reinken:

Article 7. Fundamental Law of Pure Practical Reason. So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law.

Remark. Pure geometry has postulates as practical propositions, which, however, contain nothing more than the presupposition that one *can* do something and that, when some result is needed, one *should* do it; these are the only propositions of pure geometry which apply to an existing thing. They are thus practical rules under a problematic condition of the will.^{vi}

LS: “Problematic” is the same what he called here hypothetical. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “Here, however, the rule says: One ought absolutely to act in a certain way.”^{vii}

LS: In other words,⁶⁰ without any conditions attached to them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

The practical rule is therefore unconditional and thus is thought of *a priori* as a categorically practical proposition. The practical rule, which is thus here a law, absolutely and directly determines the will objectively, for pure reason, practical in itself, is here directly legislative. The will is thought of as independent of empirical conditions and consequently as pure will, determined by the mere form of the law, and this ground of determination is regarded as the supreme condition of all maxims.

The thing is strange enough and has no parallel in the remainder of practical knowledge. For the *a priori* thought of the possibility of giving universal law, which is thus merely problematic, is unconditionally commanded as a law without borrowing anything from experience or from any external will.^{viii}

^{vi} Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 30-31.

^{vii} Ibid., 31.

^{viii} Ibid.

LS: This sentence as it were puts us at the end of the second section of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.⁶¹ The thought *a priori* of a possible universal legislation is merely problematical, meaning, analyzing ordinary moral understanding we arrive at this formula, but the whole thing, the whole sphere of moral⁶² judgments, may be a chimera or something like, other . . . or whatever you think.⁶³ But yet it is commanded as a law unqualifiedly, which you cannot say of what your father told you or anyone else when you were a child. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

It is, however, not a prescription according to which an act should occur in order to make a desired effect possible, for such a rule is always physically conditioned; it is, on the contrary, a rule which determines the will *a priori* only with respect to the form of its maxims. Therefore, it is at least not impossible to conceive of a law which merely serves the purpose of the *subjective* form of principles and yet is a ground of determination by virtue of the *objective* form of a law in general. The consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given)—^{ix}

LS: Now here [it] is of course clear: the difference between *The Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, where he somehow assumed that freedom is given somehow before, i.e., before our knowing the moral law. The true view, the final view of Kant, is [LS taps on the table] [that] we know of freedom as a fact only on the basis of our knowing the moral law as a fact. And the reasoning is very simple: Thou canst for thou oughtst. For thou oughtst. You know that you ought, you know that through the categorical imperative; and this knowledge implies that you can—that is, i.e., that you are free and there is no need for an independent deduction of freedom. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

freedom is not antecedently given), and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition *a priori* based on no pure or empirical intuition. It would be analytic if the freedom of the will were presupposed, but for this, as a positive concept, an intellectual intuition would be needed, and here we cannot assume it. In order to regard this law without any misinterpretation as given, one must note that it is not an empirical fact but the sole fact of pure reason, which by it proclaims itself as originating law. (Thus I will. Thus I command).^x

LS: Now “*Sic volo, sic iubeo*,” that is a quotation from a Latin poet, Juvenal. But in the original it goes on: “*hoc volo, sic iubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*.”^{xi64} This I will and thus

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Ibid. Reinken translates “(*sic volo, sic iubeo*).”

^{xi} Juvenal, *Satires* 6, 223.

I obey, I command. The will should take the place of reason.⁶⁵ That is one of the prime cases where quotations may be embarrassing. [Laughter] . . .

There is something to that, ya? Good. Now⁶⁶ there is another passage on the same subject; there are more, but [the] most striking⁶⁷ [is] on page 42.

Mr. Reinken: German? “Of the deduction of the principles of practical reason—”?

LS: Yes. Ya, ya.

Mr. Reinken: (That is page 43 in the LLA.)

This Analytic proves that pure reason can be practical, i.e. that of itself and independently of everything empirical it can determine the will. This it does through a fact wherein pure reason—^{xii}

LS: Now “fact” is a word which occurs rather rarely in Kant in this connection. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

a fact wherein pure reason shows itself actually to be practical. This fact is autonomy in the principle of morality by which reason determines the will to action.

At the same time it shows this fact to be inextricably bound up with the consciousness of freedom of the will, and actually to be identical with it.^{xiii}

LS: And so on. We leave it at that. Hence there cannot be a deduction.

Yes. Now, which other points⁶⁸ that we have not discussed should we take up in the short time we still have?⁶⁹ When Kant speaks of the categorical imperative, that it is a synthetic judgment *a priori*, this does not come out quite clearly but I think there is one point which he means. The categorical⁷⁰ imperative is a synthetic judgment *a priori*. Now, why? Because it is an imperative, i.e., the formula of a command, and the command can only be addressed to rational beings who may transgress as distinguished from rational beings who cannot transgress because they are simply holy. That means God.

Now this synthetic character⁷¹ of the categorical imperative is connected with the fact, or is due to the fact, that man may disobey. In other words, it is due to the fact that morality has the character of an *ought*. The “ought” cannot be inferred from any “is,” and therefore the “ought” has the character of a synthetic judgment—and since experience cannot be the basis, in this case it must be a synthetic judgment *a priori*.⁷² Does this⁷³ conform with your judgment?

Student: Wouldn’t⁷⁴ the formulation [be] synthetic in itself regardless of who it is addressed to, regardless of the facts about it?

^{xii} Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 43.

^{xiii} Ibid.

LS: No, because what we have read again in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and what we have read, it is always the formula of the categoric imperative, but in the imperative it's the formulation of a command. So⁷⁵ you cannot say the form, "act," and so on and so on.

Same Student: Right.

LS: Nor can God say it to himself, because he will—of course God is good. Subhuman beings cannot be good or bad. Man alone can be good or bad and, therefore, only for man can there be an "ought." That I believe is the root of the fact that the categoric imperative is—

Same Student: I, I—

LS: And therefore you see also here the connection with the phenomenal and the noumenal world, because man is a citizen, a member of the phenomenal as well as the noumenal world. And this, as appeared from your presentation, this distinction is at the bottom of the whole difficulty. God would not be a citizen or member of the phenomenal world. Yes?

Same Student: I have two questions. One of them is—Paton himself raises it in his commentary, the supreme principle of morality is only a categorical imperative because it is addressed to an imperfectly rational being. If it were addressed to God, or to the angels or something like that, it wouldn't assume the form of an imperative. But it would still have to be synthetic even for God or an angel, wouldn't it?

LS: That I am not so sure.

Same Student: I don't know, and Paton threw up his hands.⁷⁶ The quotations that Kant uses for the formulation⁷⁷ in the third chapter, he doesn't have it in the form of an imperative, he has it as a statement in the indicative mood. He says an absolutely good will is one whose maxim can always have—

LS: Where is this, the second paragraph?

Same Student: Third paragraph of page 447 in the German.

LS: Ya, I know, that is hopelessly difficult when you read it. Ya.

Same Student: Yes. And Paton says: "Why did he introduce this formulation? Why didn't he keep it in the form of a categorical imperative?" Or in the imperative mood rather than transpose it into the indicative mood?

LS: No,⁷⁸ well,⁷⁹ you brought up the question of Kant's way of writing. Well, Kant is capable of very great beauty. And some [examples] of [that] occur in these very sections. But then, what is characteristic of these chief works of Kant, especially *The Critique of*

Pure Reason and *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* is this (and to some extent, perhaps, also of later great writings): Kant⁸⁰ wrote his books in an amazingly short time. And *The Critique of Pure Reason* could probably have been cut down by Kant by a third,⁸¹ but somehow after his long silence he did not wish to submit himself to this curse of cutting. And perhaps this was an immoral act, but Kant could also say that the more urgent duty was⁸² to make it accessible to the book public because he might die—that is (how to say?), be sure we won't judge morally of him. But it is clear that this is not a book written like a Platonic dialogue, or for that matter like the Aristotelian *Ethics*, where you⁸³ have sufficiently . . . to give good ground why the author expressed himself as he did. And that is quite clear. This⁸⁴ in itself one . . . simply can't say, but one has to consider parallel passages. Then it becomes clear.

Same Student: It seems like there's almost outright contradictions in the third chapter.

LS: Shall we read that paragraph?⁸⁵

Mr. Reinken:

morality together with its principle follows from it by the mere analysis of its concept. But the principle is nevertheless a synthetical proposition: an absolutely good will is one whose maxim can always include itself as a universal law. It is synthetical because by analysis of the concept of an absolutely good will that property of the maxim cannot be found.^{xiv}

LS: Now what does this mean?⁸⁶ Because when he speaks of the simply good will one would think, to begin with, of God. Can one speak of God acting on maxims as distinguished from that law?⁸⁷ I believe that's the way in which I felt is [the meaning of] his words.⁸⁸ Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Such synthetical propositions, however, are possible only by the fact that both cognitions are connected through their union with a third in which both of them are to be found. The positive concept of freedom furnishes this third cognition, which cannot be, as in the case of physical causes, the nature of the sensuous world, in the concept of which we find conjoined the concepts of something as cause in relation to something else as effect.^{xv}

LS: And "something else" is underlined by Kant, meaning, something else, and therefore that is not an analytical judgment, but a synthetic one. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

We cannot yet show directly what this third cognition is to which freedom directs us and of which we have an *a priori* idea, nor can we explain the deduction of the

^{xiv} Ibid., 65.

^{xv} Ibid.

concept of freedom from pure practical reason and therewith the possibility of a categorical imperative. For this some further preparation is needed.^{xvi}

LS: Yes. Now, the closest parallel to this passage⁸⁹ occurs earlier in the second part on page 420 of the German. “Second—”

Mr. Reinken: (Page 38 in ours.)

Secondly, in the case of the categorical imperative or law of morality, the cause of difficulty in discerning its possibility is very weighty. This imperative is an *a priori* synthetical practical proposition, and, since to discern the possibility of propositions of this sort is so difficult in theoretical knowledge, it may well be gathered that it will be no less difficult in the practical.^{xvii}

LS: And the note.

Mr. Reinken: And the note.

LS: By which he explains why it is a⁹⁰ synthetic practical judgment *a priori*.

Mr. Reinken:

I connect *a priori*, and hence necessarily, the action with the will without supposing as a condition that there is any inclination^{xviii} (though I do so only objectively, i.e., under the idea of a reason which would have complete power over all subjective motives). This is, therefore, a practical proposition which does not analytically derive the willing of an action from some other volition already presupposed (for we do not have such a perfect will); it rather connects it directly with the concept of the will of a rational being as something which is not contained within it.^{xix}

LS: You see here this parenthesis: “(for we do not have such a perfect will).” Does this not mean that⁹¹ with the case of a rational being of perfect will, not the categorical imperative of course, but the corresponding proposition would be analytical?

Student: Yeah, here.

LS: Ya?

Same Student: Right in chapter 3.

LS: . . . At any rate, I think that we can say with all due modesty that⁹² this third section is very difficult, and that it is not entirely our fault. And we are fortunate enough in this case that Kant himself corrected his position in the *Critique of Practical Reason* in the

^{xvi} Ibid., 65-66.

^{xvii} Ibid., 38.

^{xviii} In original: “[to the action].” Brackets in original.

^{xix} Ibid.

passages which we read. So I think⁹³ it is not practical for us to go into any further of the very technical details of the third section, unless—yes?⁹⁴

Student: But do you think that the problems that we were left after writing the *Foundations* were solved in the *Critique of Practical Reason*? Is that what you're saying?

LS: This difficulty, surely—I mean, with which he struggled in vain in the third part of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, yes. And⁹⁵ the great question which remains of course throughout Kant, from the beginning to the end—I mean, from the *Critique of Pure Reason* on—is this distinction of the phenomenal and noumenal world, the two worlds which are no longer the sublunar and the supralunar worlds,⁹⁶ because that had gone at the latest by the time of Newton.⁹⁷ You know the Aristotelian . . .⁹⁸

And the difficulties in Kant, the manifest difficulties come to sight most clearly in his concrete moral teaching. Now the concrete moral teaching is not given⁹⁹ in the *Critique of Practical Reason* or in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, but in the *Metaphysics of Morals* itself, which Kant wrote still some years later. Now what the present-day defenders of Kant say is that a criticism of Kant's concrete moral propositions does not affect¹⁰⁰ the basis of his moral position. And this might very well be so. In other words, Kant might have been inexperienced in certain matters and therefore have made these judgments, foolish assertions. Yes?

Same Student:¹⁰¹ That's why I understood the problems arose¹⁰² in the Third Part of the *Foundations*. I understand the underlying problem to be that very problem of the relations between the phenomenal and the noumenal worlds.

LS: Yes. Well, but¹⁰³ I mean, as far as the Kantian doctrine is concerned, we are not speaking now of what Kant might have discovered as . . . and which can be divorced from the manner and the context in which he presented it. But¹⁰⁴ Kant's own doctrine stands with this distinction, and therefore, if this is a question of the distinction, then the Kantian doctrine as a whole has to be abandoned. But it might still have a very important core.

Now¹⁰⁵ there are¹⁰⁶ three points which struck me always as very strange in such a great man as Kant, a great and good man. Now the first is his definition of marriage, which occurs in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, and that is [that] marriage is a life-long contract [of people of different sex] for the mutual use¹⁰⁷ of the sexual organs. Now that sounds very funny. [Laughter] And in other words, it sounds very funny, and good. But then I thought a bit about it and said: How did Kant arrive at that? Is it only because he was a bachelor [laughter] and had very funny notions, as many people would say? I doubt that. And¹⁰⁸ what would earlier moralists have said, say, in the Aristotelian tradition, Thomist tradition? Of course, the purpose of marriage is generation of children, procreation, and education. Now this is sound and reasonable, but it is not universally valid. People marry and may have the firm intention to raise a family, and then they are—for some reason or other they don't¹⁰⁹ [beget] children although they make every effort. And this is clear. And yet no one in his senses, or hardly anyone, has said that marriage ceases to be a

marriage when there are no children, because you would then be left with such interesting questions as: How many years do you have to wait? [Laughter] Good. So¹¹⁰ I mean, the rest of the world has always taken childless marriages as perfectly respectable—perhaps unfortunate, but perfectly respectable.¹¹¹ And Kant does the same. And then he says: I must have a definition of marriage which¹¹² does not include procreation. Good. And now to say for the purpose of sexual enjoyment, that would be incompatible¹¹³ with the strict, severe moral view which Kant took. It would also be open to quite a few objections,¹¹⁴ for example, what . . . would happen in the case of illness, and so on.¹¹⁵ That, I think was the reason.¹¹⁶ Ya, and oh, another one: in the pietistic Protestantism in Germany,¹¹⁷ it happened¹¹⁸ not so rarely that people married, following the injunction of Paul broadly, and yet had the firm intention, if they could help it, not to have sexual relations. And Kant explicitly rejects this—explicitly rejects this—and therefore the sexual organs have to come in. You see, that must be the core of marriage. That is one example.

Now another is Kant's strict prohibition against revolution.¹¹⁹ Under all circumstances revolution is an unjust act. Without going into the question of the character of the tyranny, and so on, without going into such nice questions as earlier thinkers did: Is this a tyrant who has usurped power, or is it a tyrant only from the way in which he exercises power? Kant omits all these things. No, strictly forbidden.¹²⁰ But when a revolution has happened, and a revolution which brings about a more rational and a more just regime, then one should think these criminals who have brought about this should be drawn and quartered, and of course restoration . . . of the old regime. No! Kant says no! In other words, he is perfectly willing¹²¹ morally to condemn revolution, but to take them in their stride. [Laughter] That is another point which always struck me.

And the third point is one which Nietzsche has mentioned occasionally, and that is what he says¹²² in his later writing,¹²³ *Religion Within the Limits of Pure Reason*, where he raises the question: Is there any sign, any empirical sign, that there is something good—good meaning morally good, of course, not merely nice. Is there any proof of that, that there is a good principle in man? And¹²⁴ Kant says “yes.” And that is the fact that quite a few people in countries other than France, say, in Germany, were enthusiastic¹²⁵ in the early¹²⁶ days about the French Revolution. Now he says that these people did not have any interest in the Revolution. It did not bring freedom¹²⁷ to them, and only to another country. And yet what can this enthusiasm¹²⁸ prove, except the wholly disinterested enthusiasm and dedication to moral ideas? Every child knows now that these people who were enthusiasts for the French Revolution, most of them were of course the German middle class people who were in exactly the same position as the French middle class people. [Laughter]¹²⁹

But a Kantian would say, and perhaps rightly, that these are only lapses of when he was in a more or less drowsy mood, and¹³⁰ surely do not refer to the core of his teaching. And here the effect, as far as Kant's teaching is concerned: there is no position today which¹³¹ has not been affected by Kant, even positivism.¹³² I mean, if you compare¹³³ present-day positivism with British empiricism, you see the difference immediately because the activity of reason, the spontaneity of reasoning, which orders the sense data—the sense

data do not produce by their own coming together and hitting each other, an order, but they are brought about by a preceding, organizing act—that is, of course, an heritage from Kant . . . Yes?

Student: I wanted to ask about the third section, with regard to the question about whether the categorical imperative is merely *a priori*. In the paragraph at the end of the section entitled, “Of the interest attaching to ideas of morality,” he seems to say that the proof of the existence of freedom, and therefore of morality, is that if we did not conceive of ourselves as being free, then¹³⁴ whenever we thought of some moral action we would be contradicting ourselves by thinking of ourselves as at the same time part of the world of sense and part of the noumenal world. Is this not a kind of demonstration—?

LS: Ya. Well, to some extent, Kant (as we agreed) is trying to get a deduction of morality in the third part, but he fails. And he is unconvincing not only to us but to himself, as is shown by the statements in *The Critique of Practical Reason* where he explicitly denies the possibility of what he is attempting in the third part of the *Foundations*.

Same Student: Well, I’m wondering whether there was not something convincing in that demonstration after all. I mean—

LS: What?

Same Student: It boils down to something like a kind of refutation that can be rendered against any kind of materialism, which is simply that it contradicts itself by saying at the same “I know this freely, I have determined this and I have knowledge” and yet at the same time—

LS: Ya, that is another matter, ya. Yes,¹³⁵ Kant would say that, say, a scientist who believes that he can give a scientific account of science, you know . . .¹³⁶ that a biologist or psychologist could explain the phenomenon of science in terms of his science,¹³⁷ that would be an absurdity, if you mean that. Kant would say, nevertheless,¹³⁸ to use his language, [that] the spontaneity of reason¹³⁹ is essential to reason and cannot be deduced from any earlier fact. That does not yet mean that moral reason, practical reason, has a character or issues necessarily in the categoric imperative. That is something very different. Good.¹⁴⁰

¹ Deleted “what....”

² Deleted “what....”

³ Deleted “we....”

⁴ Deleted “and....”

⁵ Deleted “Now...so....”

⁶ Deleted “it....”

⁷ Deleted “this....”

⁸ Deleted “the.”

⁹ Deleted “So....”

¹⁰ Deleted “we would have to know....”

¹¹ Deleted “it....”

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- ¹² Deleted "in...."
¹³ Deleted "every act of...."
¹⁴ Deleted "you will...."
¹⁵ Deleted "they...."
¹⁶ Deleted "than the...."
¹⁷ Deleted "So we must...and this...."
¹⁸ Deleted "there is...."
¹⁹ Deleted "And therefore we have to...."
²⁰ Deleted "Is this, I mean...."
²¹ Deleted "And this would, roughly...."
²² Deleted "For what is reason according to...."
²³ Deleted "what is...we...."
²⁴ Deleted "And now we come...."
²⁵ Deleted "but...in other words...."
²⁶ Deleted "*of Pure*...."
²⁷ Deleted "the moral...."
²⁸ Deleted "He seems to...."
²⁹ Deleted "is...."
³⁰ Deleted "Insofar...no...that's too...it...."
³¹ Deleted "And therefore...."
³² Deleted "for...."
³³ Deleted "which I have...."
³⁴ Deleted "infinitely...."
³⁵ Deleted "we can...."
³⁶ Deleted "And when the same action...."
³⁷ Deleted "the scientific."
³⁸ Moved "which can be observed only by the soul." Deleted "that."
³⁹ Deleted "it is...."
⁴⁰ Deleted "It is not...."
⁴¹ Deleted "the...the...the...a...."
⁴² Deleted "many people...."
⁴³ Strauss pronounces "a" in Paton first long, then short, then long again
⁴⁴ Student pronounces "a" in Paton short.
⁴⁵ Strauss pronounces "a" in Paton short.
⁴⁶ Deleted "And...."
⁴⁷ Deleted "And...."
⁴⁸ Deleted "when."
⁴⁹ Deleted "The...the only...the...."
⁵⁰ Deleted "it must...."
⁵¹ Deleted "this, any metaphysics, any theoretical knowledge, cannot...."
⁵² Deleted "in...."
⁵³ Deleted "to German...."
⁵⁴ Deleted "scientific...."
⁵⁵ Deleted "from a much more...."
⁵⁶ Deleted "*The Critique of Pure Reason*...."
⁵⁷ Deleted "I'm sorry."
⁵⁸ Deleted "corrects...."
⁵⁹ Deleted "paragraph 7...."
⁶⁰ Deleted "without you...."
⁶¹ Deleted "of the *Foundations*."
⁶² Deleted "judgment...."
⁶³ Deleted "And now Kant [inaudible words]...."
⁶⁴ Deleted "Thus...."
⁶⁵ Deleted "Kant...."
⁶⁶ Deleted "this...."

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- 67 Deleted "let me see...."
68 Deleted "that we do not have...."
69 Deleted "Yeah well there is also I believe...."
70 Deleted "judgment...."
71 Deleted "is...."
72 Deleted "What do...."
73 Deleted "confirm...."
74 Deleted "it have to be...."
75 Deleted "God cannot tell...."
76 Deleted "This...."
77 Deleted "of the...."
78 Deleted "that...."
79 Deleted "that...."
80 Deleted "wrote them...."
81 Deleted "if he had...."
82 Deleted "to bring it...."
83 Deleted "can give ground....I mean you are sufficiently...."
84 Deleted "is...yeah...."
85 Deleted "On page...in the— **Reinken**: 'Thus the freedom of the will—'? **LS**: No, 'if the...when, if then...the freedom of will is presupposed—' **Reinken**: Oh, yes."
86 Deleted "I mean...let us [inaudible words]...."
87 Deleted "That."
88 Deleted "meaning."
89 Deleted "is...."
90 Deleted "synthetic judgment...."
91 Deleted "if we have...."
92 Deleted "this is...."
93 Deleted "we will...."
94 Deleted "**Student**: But you do think the problems [inaudible word]— **LS**: Can you speak a bit louder?"
95 Deleted "the only...."
96 Deleted "that had...."
97 Deleted "You know the word...."
98 Deleted "And...but the question...yes...."
99 Deleted "in the two...."
100 Deleted "his moral...."
101 Deleted "That's how I...."
102 Deleted "from the...."
103 Deleted "that...Kant is...."
104 Deleted "for...."
105 Deleted "I would like...I mean there is...."
106 Deleted "two questions which struck me...no."
107 Moved "of people of different sex." Deleted "I'm sorry...for the mutual use."
108 Deleted "I...."
109 Deleted "become."
110 Deleted "once you...."
111 Deleted "So...."
112 Deleted "does not have...."
113 Deleted "with a...."
114 Deleted "And...."
115 Deleted "But Kant therefore...."
116 Deleted "That was the reason that Kant had to...."
117 Deleted "there were quite...."
118 Deleted "quite...."
119 Deleted "Under no circumstances is...."
120 Deleted "And yet...."

¹²¹ Deleted "to...."

¹²² Deleted "about...yeah."

¹²³ Deleted "*Religion*...."

¹²⁴ Deleted "that...."

¹²⁵ Deleted "about."

¹²⁶ Deleted "stages...."

¹²⁷ Deleted "or what...."

¹²⁸ Deleted "mean...."

¹²⁹ Deleted "These are three examples which show...."

¹³⁰ Deleted "do not...."

¹³¹ Deleted "is not...."

¹³² Deleted "I mean...the key point...."

¹³³ Deleted "what."

¹³⁴ Deleted "whenever we thought of...."

¹³⁵ Deleted "But the question is, still...."

¹³⁶ Deleted "that he could by some...."

¹³⁷ Deleted "that he would...."

¹³⁸ Deleted "if the...."

¹³⁹ Deleted "is belongs...."

¹⁴⁰ Deleted "Now, next time we will have...let me make this clear, lest there be any miscalculation...Mr. [inaudible word] You will read your paper on *What is Enlightenment?* and *Idea...Idea for a Universal History*. And Mr. [inaudible word] will have his [inaudible words]."

Session 9: May 2, 1967

Leo Strauss: You state here on page five of your paper,ⁱ “I think that it can be shown that for Kant the fact that freedom cannot be proven or explained is necessary to the preservation of morality itself, that is, morality rightly conceived.” I think that that is true, but the explanation which you give on the following page¹ does not quite satisfy me. It is possible that you mean the same thing that I mean and did not . . . yourself clearly.² If³ we⁴ could know the intelligible world, the noumenal world, then⁵ the knowledge of it would be the highest possibility of man. But since we cannot know it and our only contact with it is the moral law, therefore morality is a fact. I don’t know whether you meant it this way, but—ya, good. So this is the paper of Mr. Harper.

And now Mr. . . . I almost said that you are again a living proof of the wisdom of my suggestion that you should type your statement,⁶ but I saw then that you had greater difficulties in reading your typescript. [Laughter] So you see that—

Student: Well it wasn’t typed by me, so— [Laughter]

LS: Oh, I see. That is a perfectly sufficient explanation. Now, to come back to another matter: you wisely refer to what Kant says in *The Critique of Pure Reason* on what he understands by an idea, and in particular to his reference to Plato’s *Republic* as an example. And in this connection Kant uses the famous words that it is possible to understand a great man better than he understood himself, and that is what he claims regarding Plato. Now is Plato’s *Republic* or the perfect commonwealth presented there an idea in Kant’s sense?

Same Student: I would think so.

LS: Kant says so, ya.

Same Student: I would think so. Well—

LS:⁷ But Kant may err. [Laughter] He may have understood him too well, i.e., much too good for Plato.

Same Student: Now the question is whether [or] how it is really an interpretation of Plato, because—

LS: Or, that—

Same Student: Well, if it can be taken as⁸ an ontological thing,⁹ which is more real than—

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: I do not know what you mean by “ontology” or “ontological,” but one thing is quite clear: an idea in the Kantian sense cannot possibly be confirmed or disconfirmed by experience. There is no need or possibility of showing the possibility of an idea in the Kantian sense, whereas Plato in the *Republic* insists on the proof of the possibility of the institution there. So that is one point which is very clear. But the other question would be: Is Plato’s republic as presented in the *Republic* an idea in Plato’s sense?

Same Student: Well, I suppose it wouldn’t be, necessarily, because—

LS: Why not?

Same Student: Well, it is a very hard question. Just what are the ideas? But I think—

LS: Ya, one thing—

Same Student: They are¹⁰ more basic than that, more simple.

LS: Yes,¹¹ in other words,¹² the perfect commonwealth of the *Republic* is figured out, constructed in speech by Socrates and his interlocutors. Ideas cannot be constructed . . . Good.

Now let us turn then to our two student papers. And first I would like to remind you of the question with which we are concerned in this course.¹³ These . . . essays by Kant which we are going to discuss from now on are contained here in the English translation with the title *On History*.¹⁴ In other words, we are now concerned with Kant’s philosophy of history, and that is the difficulty from which we started.¹⁵ The philosophy of history exists as such within Kant’s horizon, obviously, but what is the importance of it for Kant? The works dealing with that subject are kind of . . . They are not clearly a part of the system. Why is that so?

Now if we look at this crucial¹⁶ moral teaching of Kant, in the first place¹⁷ (of which we got a glimpse, at least) there is a categorical imperative which addresses every rational being and therefore every man as man regardless of time and place, we would assume. And¹⁸ the categorical imperative is followed up by the postulates of practical reason,¹⁹ two of which are God and the immortality of the soul. The other [is] a life after death, a life in the other world. So, no reference to history.²⁰ In other words, the concern with history seems to increase as the concern with life after death decreases. And that would be a sufficient reason perhaps, why Kant in this respect [is] “quote still very old-fashioned unquote” [because he] regards immortality of the soul as more important than philosophy of history. And yet²¹ there is a philosophy of history *eo nomine*. Now why . . . is come? What does the categorical imperative tell us? “Act so and so.” Where are we supposed to act so and so? In this life, in this world.

And this action includes also politically relevant action, as we will gradually see. And therefore, to the extent to which certain politically relevant actions are commanded by the moral law, we must be concerned with the outcome of these actions, i.e., with the human

future. So there is, although it seems in a secondary fashion, a necessary moral interest in philosophy of history. We will perhaps be able to say more about it after we have read more.

Now let us turn to the section on the Enlightenment, to the essay on the Enlightenment. “What is enlightenment?” Kant asks. I think that today men would not write such articles, but there are quite a few people who write essays on “What is *the* Enlightenment?,” meaning a historical essay. What is that movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth century which²² was called by Tom Paine “the Age of Reason?” And which²³ the French called Age of Enlightenment, *Lumières*? and the Germans *Aufklärung*. Now what is that?²⁴ Let us first look at this age, and Kant knows that he lives in such an age and that in a way the critiques, especially *The Critique of Pure Reason*, is the *peak* of the Enlightenment because the instrument of Enlightenment—the tool of Enlightenment, reason itself, the tool of criticism—reason itself is criticized by Kant. And to that extent, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* may be said to be the peak of the Enlightenment.

Now I remind you of very obvious things. What does the Enlightenment oppose? Superstition. Fanaticism, fanaticism which acquired I think only in the eighteenth century (I have not checked on that) the meaning which it has now. Because originally a fanatic was not an orthodox man. On the contrary. I mean, Calvin, for example, when he speaks of the fanatics he means those people²⁵ who defer only to the Holy Ghost and not to the Scriptures at the same time, as Calvin, as an orthodox Protestant, did. But I think in the eighteenth century “fanatic” acquired this general meaning,²⁶ where it included especially the orthodox and not²⁷ the sectarian people of the inner light.

Now everything is to be called before the tribunal of reason—everything, which means revelation, of course, included. And it becomes quite clear from Kant’s essay that the primary concern of the Enlightenment is with religion, and secondarily only with politics. Still noticeable in Marx. You come from Poland?

Student: No, from Hungary.

LS: Well, that’s in a way the same thing. [Laughter] You know what I mean by that.²⁸ Because for Marx,²⁹ the first is the critique of religion, ya? But . . .

Student: Yeah.

LS: And then comes the criticism of politics afterward. That was . . . from the very beginning. Now,³⁰ that revelation is called before the tribunal of reason does not necessarily mean that the thinker in question is opposed to revelation. After all, revelation may be reasonable and so it survives the test by reason. Never forget the title of a famous work of the Enlightenment, John Locke’s *Reasonableness of Christianity*.

The key word of the Enlightenment in all the languages is “prejudices.” What they are striving for is liberation from all prejudices,³¹ and if we realize that we see who, as has often been said, is the originator of the Enlightenment . . . the man who demanded this in

the most ruthless manner, the liberation from all prejudices and therefore the doubt of every previously held opinion, and that was Descartes: universal doubt.

Now calling everything³² before the tribunal of reason means also, from the beginning, that one should try to establish a human society which is entirely according to reason. One must question also *politically* all traditions—everything that Burke later called “prescriptions.” And in the more extreme but very powerful meaning of the Enlightenment, it was understood [that] all men can be made rational and therefore full members of a rational society by *enlightenment*, and that is to say by the right kind of education. In this sense, Rousseau’s *Emile* is the most outstanding document of the Enlightenment, although Rousseau has also his doubt of Enlightenment because *Emile* is exactly the case of an ordinary fellow (*Emile*) who is brought up without any prejudices whatever. Now this meant, of course, he had to be brought up under very special laboratory conditions where he could not be infected by prejudices, i.e., he had to be very wealthy.³³ Therefore religious education comes in only when he³⁴ has reached puberty,³⁵ when he can accept religion in a perfectly enlightened rational manner and not as he would get it with a mother’s milk, where he would be wholly unable to criticize³⁶ the prayers which his mother tells him, and so on.

A rational society. And that means—I refer to another classic, to Hobbes—opposed to the kingdom of darkness: rational society, so to speak the kingdom of light. And the kingdom of darkness, Hobbes means by that especially the Catholic Church as well as Calvinism, orthodox Protestants. But the rational society requires then³⁷ that there be no established church. A state without an established church cannot be said to have any religion, Hobbes says. So the principle of the secular state which *permits* religion as a strictly private affair, that goes without saying, but the main point is that the state as state doesn’t have a religion.

The next step [was] taken shortly after Hobbes’s death by Pierre Bayle in his *Diverse Thoughts on the Comet*. I forgot the exact date of that—ⁱⁱ

Student: [16]89, isn’t it?

LS: [16]89? Does it come again?

Same Student: That’s when the comet came.

LS: Ah, whether it was published probably a few years later, ya. I’m sorry, but at any rate around 1690, and clearly after Hobbes, yet part of this line, ya. And Bayle proves in this work (in a very interesting manner into which I cannot go, but it is even amusing in addition to its importance) that a society of atheists is possible. As far as I know, that is the first time that such a thought was ever suggested. A society of atheists is possible: the necessary conclusion of this whole development. Whether or not religion is to be established and what kind or kinds of religion (that is a more ordinary teaching, especially of Hobbes) depends on the sovereign, whose power ultimately derives from

ⁱⁱ Pierre Bayle, *Pensées diverses sur la comète de 1680*, published in 1682.

the individuals—he never rules in his own right, that would be superstition, that would be divine right of kings—and whose power ultimately derives from the desire of the individuals for security or prosperity. And whose duty is therefore to take care of that security and prosperity, i.e., not of their worship, that is not his business. That is Hobbes, Locke and so on.

Now another point in which the whole thought of the Enlightenment is concentrated, stated by Hobbes in the *Leviathan*: the sovereign, that is, the *present* sovereign. That seems to be trivial, but it is crucial, of course. If the sovereign were not the present sovereign, then of course the whole ballast of the past would hamper the present ruler. Whether the ruler is one man or a body of men doesn't make any difference; the concept of sovereign is indifferent to that distinction. The sovereign³⁸ is in no way bound by the past [LS taps on the table]. Reason is completely free from all the encumbrances of the past. And the enlightened sovereign—the sovereign who has studied Hobbes's *Leviathan*—will of course be wiser than all the wisdom of the ages, and therefore it would be absurd to bind him by medieval things.

Now³⁹ these few points⁴⁰ I thought that we should remember. One more point,⁴¹ which is in a way more important than the previous points. There was, of course, what is called rationalism prior to the Enlightenment, and especially there was one in classical antiquity. Say, Epicureanism, to mention this word which covers a great variety of things: that is surely a rationalistic position. But two points which we must never forget. In the classical doctrines, however radical, there is no notion of *spreading* the lights of popular enlightenment; what gives the peculiar character to the movement of the eighteenth century is the thought of the *spreading* of the propaganda of popular enlightenment.

And the second point: in the classical parallels where reason and the full use of reason, i.e. science, is highly praised, there is no notion of the *use* of science for the improvement of man's condition. No science for the sake of human power. These are two crucial points, as we will see to some extent also when we go over the Kantian essays.

Now let us turn to the Kantian essay, the definition at the beginning. "The tutelage—"

Mr. Reinken: "Man's inability to make use—"iii

LS:⁴² "The tutelage⁴³ for which he himself is responsible." Now what does this mean? Were, then, the first men capable to be enlightened because they were created perfect? That is not what Kant means, as is shown by the sequel. There cannot be⁴⁴ enlightenment before the understanding is sufficiently developed. And therefore earlier men, say, primitive men, can of course not be held guilty⁴⁵ for their lack of enlightenment. Given the proper development of the understanding, and only under these conditions, tutelage is a moral defect. The categorical imperative comes in here. The categorical imperative says, among other things,⁴⁶ "become enlightened," although that needs a somewhat longish deduction. This brings us to the question (which Kant does not discuss, at least as far as I

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, 3.

know): Is the categoric imperative truly . . . to every man regardless of place and time? Is the categoric imperative . . . to earlier man, to early men in particular?

Now let us turn to the beginning of the third paragraph of this essay on Enlightenment.

Mr. Reinken:

That the step to competence is held to be very dangerous by the far greater portion of mankind (and by the entire fair sex)—quite—^{iv}

LS: No, no.⁴⁷ Well, I didn't wish to read that in class [students chuckle]. Now, the third paragraph . . .

Mr. Reinken: (So sorry, ladies.)

For any single individual to work himself out of the life under tutelage which has become almost his nature—^v

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. Tutelage has almost become nature. The tutelage—of course, that exercised by other human beings. It can of course not ever become nature. Why? Because man is by nature rational. And?

Student: And free.

LS: And free, ya, rational and in the practical sense free. And the next sentence, will you go on, there?

Mr. Reinken:⁴⁸

is very difficult. He has come to be fond of this state, and he is for the present really incapable of making use of his reason, for no one has ever let him try it out.^{vi}

LS: So in other words, man's inability to use his own understanding is the fault of other men. What does this mean? These men are not enlightened themselves, I suppose, and they are happy in that condition because they are beneficiaries of the non-enlightenment of the others. Well, you have here rudiments of Marx, you know? Very easily recognizable. Yes? And now the next, yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Statutes and formulas, those mechanical tools of the rational employment or rather misemployment of his natural gifts, are the fetters of an everlasting tutelage.^{vii}

LS: Ya. Now, "*Satzungen und Formeln*." How did he translate that again?

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid., 4.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: “Statutes.”

LS: “Statutes,” ya. The German word *Satzungen* reminds more immediately of the Greek word . . . ,^{viii} or *nomoi*. And “formulae.” There are uniform formulae, uniform *nomoi* established by authority, ecclesiastical or political. And this is opposed to the individual *self*-legislation. Yes. Now [in] the next paragraph he speaks of that, the public is more able to enlighten itself than the individuals. Why? Why is this possible?

Student: Well,⁴⁹ I think the basic reason is the individual lives only at a certain period of time, while the public is historical, and—

LS:⁵⁰ Since Kant would never use such a phrase, how would you translate it in more simple language?

Same Student:⁵¹ Individuals in general cannot, would not, be enlightened on their own, but⁵² occasionally one man or two do get enlightened and they can pass it on to succeeding generations and slowly it spreads.

LS: So⁵³ in other words, there is a kind of tradition of reason. And⁵⁴ this thought is not sufficiently developed by Kant, which is crucial. Then there would be two kinds of tradition: the prerational traditions; and the tradition of reason, say, [up] to the scientific tradition. Yes. Again he refers to the fact that the prejudices have been planted by some men, without making clear⁵⁵ what induced them to do so.

He emphasizes here that a revolution cannot bring about freedom from prejudices. And the reasoning makes sense, that⁵⁶ as such it would only lead to a new set of prejudices, and not to freedom from prejudice. So the freedom from prejudice cannot be brought out by revolution but only by the cultivation of the mind. Enlightenment, he goes on to say, requires nothing but *freedom* of the learned men in their writings. If they are permitted to write, in⁵⁷—what Kant doesn’t add,⁵⁸ because it went without saying at that time⁵⁹—in the vernacular. In Latin this was another story, but in the vernacular, so that simple men and non-learned men, who just can read, can have access to that. Yes. This is the⁶⁰ necessary and sufficient condition of enlightenment. Public discussion by *competent* people, not by teenagers [LS taps on the table].

Now this leads to an interesting distinction⁶¹ where Kant uses terms in an apparently paradoxical way (for today, at any rate⁶²), namely, this written speech of the learned men he calls the *public* use of reason. The private use of reason is what you do—for an example: if a bureaucrat uses his reason in his office and says that a foolish law, a foolish order and counsel, whatever has handed down to him, that is none of his business. He has to obey. But he must in his capacity as a *public* man, namely as a learned man, say as an economist, he can write a criticism of that order and counsel, and publish it. It must be: that is a condition, remember? And⁶³ the most interesting case of course is that of a clergyman. Now do you have that? Page 38.

^{viii} The inaudible word is some form of the verb *tithemi*, to lay down, ordain, or establish.

Mr. Reinken:

Similarly a clergyman is obligated to make his sermon to his pupils in catechism and his congregation conform to the symbol of the church which he serves, for he has been accepted on this^{ix} condition. But as a scholar he has complete freedom, even the calling, to communicate to the public all his carefully tested and well-meaning thoughts on that which is erroneous in the symbol and to make suggestions for the better organization of the religious body and church. In doing this there is nothing that could be laid as a burden on his conscience. For what he teaches as a consequence of his office as a representative of the church, this he considers something about which he has no freedom to teach according to his own lights; it is something which he is appointed to propound at the dictation of and in the name of another. He will say, 'Our church teaches this or that; those are the proofs which it adduces.'^x

LS: Yes. Kant goes very far here in avoiding this immoral act of lying. I mean, if the clergyman always says, "We say" [LS laughs]: "Our church says that," then⁶⁴ he doesn't lie of course. But, you know?

Mr. Reinken: Yeah.

LS: That is, I mean this distinction between "I" and "we" has frequently been used by heterodox writers before, but this is, I thought, an interesting example. Good. Now in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

But would not a society of clergyman, perhaps a church conference or a venerable *classis* (as they call themselves among the Dutch), be justified in obligating itself by oath to a certain unchangeable symbol in order to enjoy an unceasing guardianship over each of its members and thereby over the people as a whole, even to make it [the oath]^{xi} eternal? I answer that this is altogether impossible. Such a contract, made to shut off all further enlightenment from the human race, is absolutely null and void even if confirmed by the supreme power, by parliaments, and by the most ceremonious of peace treaties. An age cannot bind itself and ordain to put the succeeding one into such a condition that it cannot extend its (at best very occasional) knowledge, purify itself of errors, and progress in general enlightenment. That would be a crime against human nature, the proper destination of which lies precisely in this progress; and the descendants will be fully justified in rejecting those decrees as having been made in an unwarranted and malicious manner.^{xii}

^{ix} In original: "his." The German is *diese*.

^x *Ibid.*, 6.

^{xi} Phrase in brackets not in the original.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, 7.

LS: So in other words, it is impossible to lay down any unchangeable dogmas. And it is impossible for *anyone*, because the original destiny of human nature is progress and enlightenment. Now later on he speaks, as the only point which I would like to mention here, that the freedom of scholars as exists in Prussia under Frederick the Great is wholly harmless. Under Frederick the Great everyone could write what he wanted, even against the King, surely against religion. Frederick—one of his friends for a long period was Voltaire, as you probably know—is wholly harmless to public tranquility and unity of commonwealth. Why? Now let us read the beginning of the last paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: “But only one who is himself—”^{xiii}

LS: Enlightened, ya?

Mr. Reinken: “enlightened—”^{xiv}

LS: Namely, Frederick. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Frederick “is not afraid of shadows, and who has a numerous and well-disciplined army to—”^{xv}

LS: Hear, hear! [Students chuckle]

Mr. Reinken: “assure public peace, he can say: ‘Argue as much as you will—”^{xvi}

LS: Can say what a republic cannot dare to say. Here. Does he translate that?

Reinken: I think he is about to—

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: translate. “Talk what you like to, but obey.”^{xvii} A republic could not dare to say such a thing.”^{xviii}

LS: So in other words, Kant takes here the side of what was called “enlightened despotism.” This thought, that you can have the maximum freedom of speech only under the strongest government, i.e. absolute monarchy, goes back to Machiavelli—I think *Discourses*, book 1, chapter 10, if I remember well—and implicitly reasserted by Spinoza in his *Political Treatise*. Yes. This⁶⁵ we see here in Kant too. Now how Kant will square

^{xiii} Ibid., 10.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} In original: “Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!”

^{xviii} Ibid.

this with the Rousseauan and republican heritage, we must wait until we come to his other writings to see. But still, he goes on. Let us read the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Here is shown a strange and unexpected trend in human affairs in which almost everything, looked at in the large, is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom appears advantageous to the freedom of mind of the people, and yet it places inescapable limitations upon it; a lower degree of civil freedom, on the contrary, provides the mind with room for each man to extend himself to his full capacity. As nature has uncovered from under this hard shell the seed for which she most tenderly cares—the propensity and vocation to free thinking—this gradually works back upon the character of the people, who thereby gradually become capable of managing freedom [i.e. civil freedom]^{xix}; finally, it affects the principles of government, which finds it to its advantage to treat men, who are now more than machines, in accordance with their dignity.^{xx}

LS: Yes. In other words, this freedom of speech, guaranteed by an enlightened, absolute monarch, is the best preparation⁶⁶ for a true republic.⁶⁷ By that freedom of speech they are becoming prepared for becoming enlightened citizens, and not by the practice of freedom prior to enlightenment. A point of some importance for political thought.⁶⁸

Is there any point you would like to raise? Yes, Mr. Schaeffer?

Mr. Schaeffer: Isn't there an inconsistency, an . . . assumption that the enlightened despot does not have an interest in maintaining the despotism after his death?

LS: Yes. And especially he might have as a successor as Frederick the Great had—Frederick William II,⁶⁹ with whom Kant got into trouble.

Student: That's when he became a republican, after that.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: That's when he became a republican.

LS: No—well, I think that he was a republican from the day on he had read Rousseau, but he tried⁷⁰ somehow to manage. Yes.

Now this writing on *Idea of a⁷¹ Universal History in Cosmopolitan Intent* is based on one premise which becomes clear from the very beginning, and that is the teleology of nature. Nature acts towards an end and therefore, because of this teleology of nature, there is a philosophy of history. Or more precisely: the reasonableness of history is only one part of the universal teleology of nature. Now, how is this connected with Kant's moral

^{xix} Phrase in brackets not in the original.

^{xx} Ibid.

philosophy as we have gotten an . . . of?⁷² Is there any connection between Kant's moral philosophy and teleology of nature?

Student:⁷³ I think in the *Foundations* we have read,⁷⁴ at one point he speaks about the development of individual's faculties which is required by the formulation of a categorical imperative which requires that humanity always be treated as an end.

LS: Ya. More precisely. Yes?

Student: The only popular proof he gives of the categorical imperative is—

LS: No, not the proof.⁷⁵ It's not a proof. You⁷⁶ [can] say a type. Teleological nature is a type of the moral law. And therefore he can present, for example, our duty to develop our faculties, as *meant* by nature for development, as an illustration of the moral law.

In other words, what Kant is discussing here is the question: Under what condition⁷⁷ would history make sense? Would the account of human deeds throughout the ages make sense? And the general answer which Kant gives is this. History does not make any sense⁷⁸ if we look at the individuals and their fates, because there is nonsense: the best men, so to speak, destroyed, and the greatest crooks, if they are clever enough, amply rewarded. There is no sense in that, and that is the reason why we need the immortality of the soul, i.e., a state in which there is harmony between happiness and worthiness to be happy. This we cannot expect from earthly life at any time. But on the other hand, this fate of men in this life makes sense if we look not at the individuals but at the human race, the species. And now⁷⁹ at the beginning. Yes?

Student: In terms of “looking at the human race” is that in all time? Is that—

LS: In all time? Ya. Well, I mean, Kant doesn't say that it is simple, but it can be this way. But on the whole the . . . yes.

Now⁸⁰ in the introduction to this section, Kant speaks first of the full determination of the phenomena of the human will, meaning as we have seen already from the other writings upon which we have considered, human actions as knowable and as observable are as fully determined as any other phenomenon. The example which he gives is that everyone is free to marry and not to marry. There is no moral obligation in this respect. But if we look at the statistical tables we see that the frequency of marriages, and which age groups and this kind of thing—that this is subject to laws as much as any other⁸¹ phenomena. Kant thinks, of course, of the early statisticians of the eighteenth century—I mean, like Quetelet,^{xxi} who had given this proof.

^{xxi} Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874), Belgian mathematician, sociologist, and statistician. Published *Sur l'homme et le développement de ses facultés, ou Essai de physique sociale* (1835) in which he describes a “social physics” which is one of the first attempts to apply statistics to social phenomena. It puts forth the concept of an “average man” who is the aggregate of the mean values of a collection of social science statistics.

Yet these determined actions, fully determined by precedent causes, reveal an intention of nature, Kant says. Now this intention of course cannot possibly lie on the phenomenal level alone, because there determinism alone would be valid.⁸² If we take a broad view, if we consider the play of the freedom of the human will as Kant puts it here in the large, then we may observe a steadily progressing, though slow, development of the original dispositions of men. The individuals are unaware of that intention of nature; and even if they are aware of it, they are in most cases uninterested in it and yet nature, knowing better, brings it about.⁸³ In other words, nature⁸⁴ uses rules, one could almost say, anticipating Hegel's later phrase. But Hegel does not only speak of the rules of nature, but the rules of reason, because the teleology of nature in the Kantian sense has in the meantime lost still more of its power than it had already in Kant.

In the beginning of the second paragraph, Kant says . . . Now this plan which nature follows in the course throughout the ages has something in common with what *reasonable* citizens of the world, i.e. of a world state, would do. They would act according to an agreed upon plan. But men as we are and as men always have been do not act on an agreed upon plan. Yet nature forces them to act according to her, nature's, plan.

The second proposition: teleological nature is concerned with the use of reason in the human race and not in the individuals. Regarding the individuals, what happens, what we can observe, makes no sense, as I have said before. But in the race it does make sense. And here you see the difference between morality and what the philosophy of history does. In the case of history, nature acts on the human race and not on the individuals *qua* individuals. What does the categorical imperative do? Whom does the categorical imperative address?

Student: Individuals.

LS: Individuals. In English it wouldn't come out because of the disappearance of the singular, but in German it is quite clear that it is the singular. *Thou, act thou*, and so.

At the end of the⁸⁵ second thesis, "and this—"

Mr. Reinken:⁸⁶ "This would destroy all practical principles, and Nature, whose wisdom must serve as the fundamental principle in judging all her other offspring, would thereby make man alone a contemptible plaything."^{xxii}

LS: Yes. Ya, this key point: "and this would destroy all practical principles."

Mr. Reinken: Principles.

LS: Ya?⁸⁷ Which means, at the very least, [that] this progress of the race, brought about by nature over the heads⁸⁸ of the individuals, is nevertheless morally required. Because

^{xxii} Ibid., 13.

what else could it mean, if it would destroy all practical principles, the denial of it? The denial of this progress of the race would destroy all practical principles.⁸⁹ Morality requires this progress of the race. Yes?

Student: Assuming it would destroy all practical principles but . . . all absolute . . .

LS: “All practical principles” means, of course, also the morality too; otherwise he would have said, “all hypothetical practical principles.” But he says “all practical principles.”⁹⁰

In other words, just as⁹¹ the categorical imperative, morality, requires immortality of the soul, ya? [LS writes on the blackboard]⁹² In an analogous way, morality requires historical progress.⁹³ The relation between these two postulates, that is the problem which we have to solve. Do you see that? Because the mere fact that Kant does not mention that historical progress among the postulates of practical reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, or for that matter⁹⁴ in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, shows that [in] some way this has a lower status in Kant’s mind.⁹⁵ But nevertheless, it is there, and not without reason.

In the third thesis, would you . . . that? “Nature has meant men to have no other happiness or protection, except the one which he creates for himself through his own reason.” Now we have seen this already from the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. We don’t have to go into that. There is a difficulty here towards the end of the third thesis. Yes, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

It remains strange that the earlier generations appear to carry through their toilsome labor only for the sake of the later, to prepare for them a foundation on which the later generations could erect the higher edifice which was Nature’s goal, and yet that only the latest of the generations should have the—^{xxiii}

LS: “Only the latest.” Yes. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

should have the good fortune to inhabit the building on which a long line of their ancestors had (unintentionally) labored without being permitted to partake of the fortune they had prepared. However puzzling this may be, it is necessary if one assumes that a species of animals should have reason, and, as a class of rational beings each of whom dies while the species is immortal, should develop their capacities to perfection.^{xxiv}

LS: So in other words, in a way Kant vindicates providence or the wisdom of nature but he cannot vindicate it entirely, as appears from this passage. Because the many, many generations of men are sacrificed for the earthly happiness of the later or last generations. This difficulty remains. In other words, it is not a very great comfort for someone who

^{xxiii} Ibid., 14.

^{xxiv} Ibid.

falls victim to wars, revolutions or what have you, if he says “Well, it will be good for great-great children.”⁹⁶ Yes.

Now in the fourth proposition, here Kant speaks about how nature proceeds in bringing about this happy ending: man’s social anti-sociality. What Kant speaks about is Hobbes’s war of everybody against everybody, which he understands more profoundly than Hobbes did, because Hobbes thought that it would be simply asocial. Kant sees that you⁹⁷ cannot be anti-social without being in a more fundamental sense social. Anti-social is only a modification of being a⁹⁸ sociable being.⁹⁹ But otherwise the thought is your Hobbesian thought: men have¹⁰⁰ anti-social egotistic desires—what Hobbes called pride.¹⁰¹ And this conflict forces men into entering civil society,¹⁰² and therewith developing their reason. Ya, otherwise, as he says about the center of this fourth proposition, “without those—”

Mr. Reinken:

those in themselves unamiable characteristics of unsociability from whence opposition springs—characteristics each man must find in his own selfish pretensions—all talents would remain hidden, unborn in an Arcadian shepherd's life, with all its concord, contentment, and mutual affection. Men, good-natured as the sheep they herd, would hardly reach a higher worth than their beasts; they would not fill the empty place in creation by achieving their end, which is rational nature.^{xxv}

LS: Yes. So in other words, this is all to the good, these vices. These private vices are public benefits, someone had said before Kant. Do you know who?

Student: Mandeville.

LS: Mandeville, ya. Mandeville.^{xxvi} And what Mandeville said regarding¹⁰³ each present situation: that the private vices are public benefit—for example, luxury (private vice) leads to the improvement of trade. And also vanity. What would become of many industries without female and male vanity? And so on and so on.¹⁰⁴ What Mandeville says of each society at a given time, Kant says of the whole process. These private vices are the vehicle of the process. So the historical process is very far from being a moral process, and yet it is morally good. That is a paradox. Yes?

Student: I’m wondering if there is any problem in reconciling Kant’s assertion that nature wants man to have happiness only which he has created for himself with his own reason, and yet identifying the main mechanism of progress as being that which stems from his irrationality and which nature is doing for him.

^{xxv} Ibid., 15-16.

^{xxvi} Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), English philosopher and economist of Dutch extraction. In his work *The Fable of the Bees* (first published 1714) he concludes a section called “A Search into the Nature of Society” (added in the 1723 edition) by stating that “Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits.”

LS: Ya, but still. Look, take the sheep-like men of¹⁰⁵ lamb-like good-naturedness. The wolf, or other beasts of prey—I mean, I am speaking now of the human analogue¹⁰⁶—the mere calculating crook uses his reason more than a simple, lamb-like innocent. This Machiavellian thought is an ingredient of Kant's philosophy of history. That is, I mean, Kant is in one way of course at the absolute opposite pole of Machiavelli, as everyone must have seen, but in his philosophy of history this kind of Machiavellianism, which is so characteristic of modern thought, enters. That is the only way in which you can ever achieve the perfect, rational society.

Same Student: Yes, but—

LS: Man's self-interest,¹⁰⁷ that interest to which Adam Smith, for example, appeals and to which Mandeville appeals, and Hobbes and Locke, and Rousseau . . . That is the . . . of progress.

Same Student: That is, nature wants man to¹⁰⁸ benefit only from that which he gets through the use or misuse of his reason?

LS:¹⁰⁹ Well, Kant seems to¹¹⁰ think that the first uses of reason will be misuses. The good use of reason, i.e., the moral use, will come later. But not necessarily. Not necessarily.¹¹¹ Traditionally it was said that perfect society requires that men become angels, ya? One could say that in a way Plato said it of his own republic. And Kant says: No. The perfect society is possible as a society of *devils*, provided that they are shrewd calculators. Imagine? Meaning, for example, just as today where¹¹² many people would say: We are not starry-eyed idealists; we are absolutely sober, pragmatic, political men and for this reason we are opposed to any war because of the danger of thermonuclear conflagration. Something of this kind is in Kant.¹¹³ The necessity¹¹⁴ [of] the situation will become so that war and other abominations will no longer *pay*. That is the progress. And this fact alone, that it will no longer pay, is the guarantee for the establishment of a perfect social order.

Now here there comes the crucial difference between Kant on the one hand, and Hegel and Marx on the other. For Kant, the difference¹¹⁵ between morality and amorality, the nature of devils, is crucial.¹¹⁶ Rules of nature will men make behaving in accordance with the moral law, but for immoral reasons. They will not make them moral men. Therefore, Kant can speak of devils. And this change, from behaving according to the moral law but for devilish reasons, to morality—this change can in no way be guaranteed and predicted. That depends entirely on the decision of the individual [LS taps on the table]. Do you see that point? And therefore, that is the deepest reason I think why Kant's philosophy of history is of lesser weight than his doctrine of the immortality of the soul. What¹¹⁷ can be brought about by nature is only a state *according* to morality, *according* to reason, but not a *truly* moral state [LS taps on the table]. Now what Hegel and Marx tried to do and must try to do is to say [that] if you get the objective conditions in accordance with morality and reason, you get the moral change as a kind of inevitable byproduct.¹¹⁸ That they must say; otherwise Kant would be superior to them as a philosopher of history.

I'm sorry, we have to leave it now. We will discuss the rest, the last five propositions. Only one point I would like to mention:¹¹⁹ the sheep. Men could live like sheep. You remember, perhaps, from the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* the reference to the South Sea Islanders—you know, who do not develop their faculties.¹²⁰ They act against the moral law. I mean that they may be very amiable people, but they do not make that effort which they are required to do as moral beings. Now this would be an interesting question. These South Sea Islanders, harmless people but yet wrong in a very important sense, will never become worthy of happiness. Will they not become immortal? Because they don't deserve happiness after death, is it not so? I mean, they are not as bad as very wicked criminals, but they are not good men because they do not develop their . . . That is a question which Kant, I believe, never discusses, but surely I should mention this. Now next time we will conclude the discussion of this section.

¹ Deleted "is not...."

² Deleted "Now what does...."

³ Deleted "there were."

⁴ Deleted "would know the...or."

⁵ Deleted "this would be."

⁶ Deleted "but for the fact...."

⁷ Deleted "What...."

⁸ Deleted "a really...an ontological...as an...as."

⁹ Deleted "which is...is really...that."

¹⁰ Deleted "more single...."

¹¹ Deleted "that is what...."

¹² Deleted "the idea...the...."

¹³ Deleted "This...things...."

¹⁴ Deleted "And that...."

¹⁵ Deleted "That Kant...."

¹⁶ Deleted "moral and political...."

¹⁷ Deleted "as we...."

¹⁸ Deleted "this...."

¹⁹ Deleted "the two most...."

²⁰ Deleted "This would...."

²¹ Deleted "philosophy...."

²² Deleted "is called...."

²³ Deleted "in...."

²⁴ Deleted "What...."

²⁵ Deleted "who are...."

²⁶ Deleted "where it meant...."

²⁷ Deleted "the more...."

²⁸ Deleted "And...."

²⁹ Deleted "too...that is...so."

³⁰ Deleted "this...."

³¹ Deleted "And this...."

³² Deleted "before reason...."

³³ Deleted "But, still, it is nevertheless...."

³⁴ Deleted "is...."

³⁵ Deleted "even he is...."

³⁶ Deleted "what his mother...."

³⁷ Deleted "that in the...."

³⁸ Deleted "the...."

³⁹ Deleted "this...."

⁴⁰ Deleted "I would...."

-
- ⁴¹ Deleted "which is perhaps...."
⁴² Deleted "Let me first get this. Oh I see that now, he has changed...yes."
⁴³ Deleted "of which he...."
⁴⁴ Deleted "enlightened...."
⁴⁵ Deleted "of their...."
⁴⁶ Deleted "be...."
⁴⁷ Deleted "the...he...I see...he probably makes...."
⁴⁸ Deleted "But...."
⁴⁹ Deleted "because individual lives for only...."
⁵⁰ Deleted "So in other words...yeah...."
⁵¹ Deleted "Well that...if just one man...."
⁵² Deleted "occasionally a man...."
⁵³ Deleted "in other words...there is...but this is...."
⁵⁴ Deleted "that's quite...this...."
⁵⁵ Deleted "why...."
⁵⁶ Deleted "it would only...."
⁵⁷ Deleted "the...."
⁵⁸ Deleted "but...."
⁵⁹ Deleted "while...."
⁶⁰ Deleted "only...that is to say."
⁶¹ Deleted "which...which...."
⁶² Deleted "This."
⁶³ Deleted "the...the interesting case is that of...."
⁶⁴ Deleted "he doesn't commit...."
⁶⁵ Deleted "is still...."
⁶⁶ Deleted "of...."
⁶⁷ Deleted "There are...."
⁶⁸ Deleted "Now let us turn...."
⁶⁹ Deleted "who was...."
⁷⁰ Deleted "to...to...."
⁷¹ Deleted "*General History*...."
⁷² Deleted "What is the...."
⁷³ Deleted "He...."
⁷⁴ Deleted "he makes...."
⁷⁵ Deleted "But...."
⁷⁶ Deleted "cannot."
⁷⁷ Deleted "would the...."
⁷⁸ Deleted "as far...."
⁷⁹ Deleted "in the...."
⁸⁰ Deleted "he...."
⁸¹ Deleted "phenomenon...."
⁸² Deleted "We must take...."
⁸³ Deleted "This is...."
⁸⁴ Deleted "has...."
⁸⁵ Deleted "second book...."
⁸⁶ Deleted "'point of time—' Or no, or...."
⁸⁷ Deleted "That...."
⁸⁸ Deleted "of men...."
⁸⁹ Deleted "Morally...."
⁹⁰ Deleted "Morality is...."
⁹¹ Deleted "morality...."
⁹² Deleted "In a parallel...."
⁹³ Deleted "But this is not...the...."
⁹⁴ Deleted "in the *Metaphysics of*...."
⁹⁵ Deleted "But it is...."

⁹⁶ Deleted "And one must...."

⁹⁷ Deleted "cannot have...."

⁹⁸ Deleted "social...."

⁹⁹ Deleted "And this...."

¹⁰⁰ Deleted "this."

¹⁰¹ Deleted "And this principle of conflict...."

¹⁰² Deleted "meaning...."

¹⁰³ Deleted "the present situation...."

¹⁰⁴ Deleted "What Kant...."

¹⁰⁵ Deleted "sheep-like ...or sheep- or."

¹⁰⁶ Deleted "uses...."

¹⁰⁷ Deleted "that is the...."

¹⁰⁸ Deleted "have only...."

¹⁰⁹ Deleted "To...."

¹¹⁰ Deleted "say...."

¹¹¹ Deleted "Man, as Kant says in other writings which we will read."

¹¹² Deleted "people would say...."

¹¹³ Deleted "That...."

¹¹⁴ Deleted "the situation...."

¹¹⁵ Deleted "between the morality...."

¹¹⁶ Deleted "There...this...."

¹¹⁷ Deleted "will be brought about...."

¹¹⁸ Deleted "Otherwise they could never...."

¹¹⁹ Deleted "because in this...of which...."

¹²⁰ Deleted "So this is...."

Session 10: May 4, 1967

Leo Strauss: ⁱMr. . . . , you have been quite harsh on Kant.¹ And I believe you should have been a bit hard—this is fair, but you have the great . . . of . . . on your side. [Students chuckle] And now if we look at situation today, and the very common view would be that Herder got a point which Kant did not see, you know? The reason being that² for Herder, a philosophy of history was possible as a theoretical pursuit, and for Kant it was not possible; and therefore Herder's actual capacity of empathy for other times and cultures surpassed that of Kant by far. I mean, this is what would be said today by everyone, and therefore³ from the present-day point of view one could say⁴ from the beginning [that] a case could be made for Herder.

But you did not bring out what precisely is it which caused in Kant, in spite of his great politeness, something like an antagonism, an antipathy to Herder. What was that? I mean very simply without⁵ engaging in a silly psychology or, for that matter, without going very deeply into the substance of the argument. How did he view Herder? What kind of a man?

Student: A literary man.

LS: Yes, but not only that. That is true.⁶ He thought there was an improper mixing of philosophy and poetry, that's quite true. But there was—

Same Student: He was supposedly a religious man, too.

LS: Ya. Not only “supposedly”; he was a Protestant clergyman. And this is one point,⁷ and Kant had somehow the feeling: here is someone [who] tries to smuggle in traditional religious ideas⁸—greatly modified, of course (you know, Herder was not exactly a Lutheran orthodox man)—into philosophy.

For example, you say Kant disclaims philological knowledge. What does this mean in the context?

Same Student: What kind of knowledge?

LS: Philological knowledge. Philological language.

Same Student: Oh, philological?

LS: Ya. Well?

Same Student: Well, in that context it would be a disclaimer⁹ of knowledge of Hebrew, or—

ⁱ The session begins with Strauss commenting on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: Exactly. So it is the Bible which is concerned. He says, “Well, you know that much better than I, and¹⁰ that’s not my subject,” in the same way in which Spinoza¹¹ had been silent about the New Testament by saying “I don’t know Greek.” So¹² this is indeed the issue.

Now one point. You spoke a few times of evolution. That is very misleading today. Now what is evolution, what does evolution mean here?

Same Student: I found that a great difficulty to decide what exactly Kant meant by evolution—

LS: Ya, well, he meant what everyone meant by evolution at that time and which Kant develops most clearly in a paragraph of *The Critique of Judgment*. But this was a common view, not particular to Kant. In one word, to avoid the grossest misunderstanding, Kant and Herder speak of the evolution of the individuals, not of species. This came up later and, as far as I know, the first man who made the suggestion to the evolution of species out of other species was Diderot, the French writer—and who did it even before Herder, but this had no effect. And the first lay teacher of evolution was Lamarck,¹³ around 1800, and then of course Darwin. But¹⁴ the question¹⁵ simply was this: Is the development of, say of the human embryo, is this exactly like a seed of a plant, so that everything is already in the seed, only we can’t see it, but is already there? Or¹⁶ is something added to it which, if we had sufficiently powerful microscopes, we could see the actions of these things and they would be added to it? That was called epigenesis, something coming to, in addition to what originally was.¹⁷ This was the issue at that time. But this only in passing.¹⁸ May I ask you, do you ever read Herder?

Same Student: No.

LS: I see. Then you are of course handicapped. But in spite of the fact that you know him only from Kant’s excerpts, he attracted you more than Kant.

Same Student: Not unambiguously. Maybe I didn’t express myself clearly. What I meant to say was that Kant refused to express sympathy for any of Herder’s views in this context. But I tried to express some doubt as to whether he would express any sympathy in other contexts, specifically the *Critique*—

LS: No. I think this fundamental opposition remains throughout. Herder had attended classes of Kant; he was younger than Kant and had spoken of him with high regard. And Kant also¹⁹ has high regard for Herder too, but Kant belongs to a different order simply²⁰ than Herder does.

Now it might have been better if you had, of course, read the quotations from Herder but concentrated on what Kant does without trying to give us an account of Herder, because the basis for that is too small. But at any rate, I thank you for your paper, which was quite satisfactory.²¹

We have not yet finished²² the discussion which we began last time, the *Idea of a Universal History*²³ in *Cosmopolitan Intent*. And²⁴ we discussed the²⁵ [fourth] thesis and have now to discuss the fifth. Yes. Now will you read to us, Mr. Reinken, the fifth thesis?

Mr. Reinken:

The greatest problem for the human race, to the solution of which Nature drives man, is the achievement of anⁱⁱ universal civic society which—ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: No, that is not correct. “Of a civil society which in a universal manner, administers right.” He is not speaking now of the word “society.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “of a civil society which administers right in a universal manner *among men*.”^{iv}

LS: I.e., without giving privileges to some—that would not be universal—and denying these privileges to others, but the same law for everybody. Yes? Well,²⁶ nature forces man to the solution of this problem because of that anti-social sociality with which she has endowed him as we have seen before. Go on, please.

Mr. Reinken:

The highest purpose of Nature, which is the development of all the capacities which can be achieved by mankind, is attainable only in society, and more specifically—^v

LS: Ya, that²⁷ I believe would be granted universally, or at least generally: that man cannot attain his development except in society. But now Kant makes an important qualification.

Mr. Reinken:

more specifically in the society with the greatest freedom. Such a society is one in which there is mutual opposition among the members—^{vi}

LS: That’s too weak for what Kant says. “Thorough” would be better, a “thorough, all-pervasive antagonism of its members.”

Mr. Reinken:

total opposition among the members together with the most exact definition of freedom and fixing of its limits so that it may be consistent with the freedom of others. Nature demands that humankind should itself achieve this goal like all its other destined goals. Thus a society in which freedom under external laws—^{vii}

ⁱⁱ In original: “a”

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, 16.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

LS: “External laws” meaning laws enforceable . . . internal law, the moral law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Public law.

external laws is associated in the highest degree with irresistible power, i.e., a perfectly just civic constitution, is the highest problem Nature assigns to the human race;—^{viii}

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. So the greatest freedom possible, and which . . . hence an all-pervasive antagonism of its members. And that means in itself, to make it quite clear, the greatest license. You know these people,²⁸ [I] referred last time to Mandeville’s “private vice, public benefits” and similar . . . people follow simply their inclination, and this is taken for granted. But now Kant brings in the limitation, and the limitation is freedom: to be as beastly as you please, provided you grant the same freedom to everybody else. Now you can see that—a simple example would be that of course, regarding large parts of sex and morality—to mention a case now frequently under discussion, where people say frequently, when the old-fashioned regulations are attacked—well, these people say of homosexuals: They don’t do any harm to anyone because both agree with it. And therefore, only when other people who do *not* agree are harmed is it a matter for the legislator.

Now one can state this as follows in more general terms: there are two notions of freedom, the premodern view and the modern view. And Kant, of course, has the modern. According to the premodern view, license, doing as you please, has to be limited by a principle coming from above. Let’s call it a vertical principle. How is that? A vertical principle. That may be God’s law, that may be the natural end of man in the Aristotelian sense, that would make no difference because it is also vertical compared with what you are doing or intending now.

Now this . . . now ruined this completely.^{ix} Look, that’s the only thing we should say. Well, at any rate, you know the difference between vertical and horizontal. [Laughter] I labor the point.²⁹ And the objection to this, the classic modern objection to this, is this: here you depend on a limiting, restraining force of which you do not *know*, either because you cannot know the existence of God—or even if you can, you do not know God’s way of punishing or rewarding men, or whatever it may be—or you don’t know an end of man. Of course, with the rejection of teleology by modern natural science, this was settled.

The only thing to do is something of³⁰ which you know and on which you can depend. And that is the restraint which men exercise on one another. That is what I called the horizontal. The others are as nasty as you are, but they are other people, and somehow the more reasonable among them will see that a deal, a restraint, is the only thing which

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Strauss is probably referring to the blackboard drawing from the previous class, which has been at least partially erased.

makes possible intelligent nations or, as Kant puts it, a nation of devils. This is the point which Kant makes here.

But Kant goes beyond that and goes beyond what his predecessors like Hobbes, Locke etc., have said. He says³¹ “this freedom [is] under law,³² and the law is meant to be fundamentally a law restraining everyone equally. And the limit of the law is to be limited to things which can directly³³ harm the others.” Kant implies here that the greatest possible freedom compatible with the freedom of everybody else is the basis of the perfectly just constitution. The perfectly just constitution is that one which recognizes that greatest possible freedom made compatible with the same freedom of everybody else. And this presupposes that that freedom is the sole ground of right, if it is to be the perfectly just constitution.

Now here Kant differs radically from his predecessors, because this fundamental right of freedom is no longer *based* on the allegedly fundamental right of self-preservation. And therefore, certain difficulties [do not arise], for example, the capital punishment, and the duty to bear arms and expose oneself to violent death, which are difficulties once you presuppose that you enter civil society in order to preserve your life. Because the fellow who is to be executed did not enter civil society [LS taps on table for emphasis] with the notion that he would give civil society the right to execute him. And the same applies also, of course, to war.

Now if self-preservation is no longer the basis, these difficulties are immediately disposed of. The basis is solely that freedom. And of course that means also a divorce from any natural basis, because this freedom is not, like self-preservation, something which man shares with the brutes. Good. Now let us turn to the next thesis.

Mr. Reinken: “*This problem is the most difficult and the last to be solved by mankind.*”^x

LS: Yes. And, again, Kant develops this in very powerful language. Man is a beast which needs a master, but the master will be himself a beast, being a human being. How can you find it? How can you find it? And he says towards the end when he says, “from so crooked wood that from which man—”

Mr. Reinken:

[The] task is therefore the hardest of all; indeed, its complete solution is impossible, for from such crooked wood as man is made of, nothing perfectly straight can be built.^{xi}

LS:³⁴ Only the approximation of this idea is imposed on us by nature. So the perfectly just society can never be established. We can only approximate it. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^x Ibid., 17.

^{xi} Ibid., 17-18.

That it is the last problem to be solved follows also from this: it requires that there be a correct conception of a possible constitution—^{xii}

LS: No, “a correct conception of the nature of a possible constitution.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

of the nature of a possible constitution, great experience gained in many paths of life, and—far beyond these—a good will ready to accept such a constitution.^{xiii}

LS: Now here Kant seems to presuppose that morality is presupposed for the greatest approximation to the just society. But this is not the view in his later publications, as is shown by the passage on the angels of which I referred last time. There is an interesting note here.

Mr. Reinken:

The role of man is very artificial. How it may be with the dwellers on other planets and their nature we do not know. If, however, we carry out well the mandate given us by Nature, we can perhaps flatter ourselves that we may claim among our neighbors in the cosmos no mean rank. Maybe among them—^{xiv}

LS: Very important now in the space age, if we need them. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Maybe among them each individual can perfectly attain his destiny in his own life. Among us, it is different; only the race can hope to attain it.^{xv}

LS:³⁵ You see how important it is for Kant to limit his moral-political teaching to man, and not to all rational beings simply as is indicated by this paragraph. Yes. And now we come to a crucial proposition, seven.

Mr. Reinken:

The problem of establishing a perfect civic constitution is dependent upon the problem of a lawful external relation among states and cannot be solved without a solution of the latter problem.^{xvi}

LS: Now what does this mean in simple terms?

Mr. Reinken: No justice while there is war.

LS: Yes. No, go a step further. I mean, yes, that’s what I—

^{xii} Ibid., 18.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: A universal world state.

LS: Yes, yes. Call it United Nations—call it, as Kant called it, a league of nations. But it is so.³⁶ Without the abolition of war,³⁷ at least without the establishment of an authority above the individual states, you cannot have the good society.

Now here the difference between Kant and the classics is of course quite striking, because there is no notion in Plato and Aristotle³⁸ that you cannot have a good polity,³⁹ if the whole world, so to speak, is not covered with good polities and they all form part of the universal league. The reason can be stated as follows: if Kant were right, then there could not be a good individual in an imperfect state, which Kant would deny. There can be one, or more than one. And if it is possible to be a good man living in an imperfect society, why should there not be a good society living in an imperfect world? Be this as it may, Kant is one of the most powerful presenters—not in this, but in the *Perpetual Peace*, especially—of the view that one must make this leap from the order of peace within the individual states to a universal order of peace for the sake of justice. Yes?⁴⁰

Mr. Reinken: But the republic and the city to be founded in the *Laws* were not going to be in very extensive foreign relations, but were to be as tucked away as possible.

LS: Yes, but still in the *Laws* it is perfectly clear that (and in the *Republic*, too) that they have a warrior class, ya? You don't have a warrior organ which is functionless. The only example which you could give is a statement of Aristotle in the *Politics*,⁴¹ in book 7 or so, where he says there could be⁴² a perfect *polis* without any external relations, say on a far-away island which has no connection whatever. That is true. But Aristotle did not regard this as a likely or normal case, ya, whereas for Kant this is of very great importance. Yes. Now, the difficulties indicated by Kant in the seventh thesis, if you will go, turn around, it is probably a new edition and a new paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: “All wars?”

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

All wars are accordingly so many attempts (not in the intention of man, but in the intention of Nature) to establish new relations among states, and through the destruction or at least the dismemberment of all of them,” states, “to create new political bodies, which, again, either internally or externally, cannot maintain themselves and which must thus suffer like revolutions; until finally, through the best possible civic constitution and common agreement and legislation—^{xvii}

LS: No. “Partly through the best possible arrangement of the civil constitution domestically.”

Mr. Reinken: Domestically.

^{xvii} Ibid., 19.

LS: “Partly—”

Mr. Reinken:⁴³

partly through common agreement and legislation in external affairs, a state is created which, like a civic commonwealth, can maintain itself automatically.^{xviii}

LS: “As an automaton,” is [a] better translation. This is of course a point which the organic thinkers opposed to in Kant and Hobbes and the other cases of the Enlightenment, that they conceived of civil society as an automaton,⁴⁴ i.e., without a life proper of its own. Good.

Now from this quotation again the intention of nature, it is clear that only a teleological nature can be thought to bring about this, or to intend this kind of state of man. But let us read the next paragraph, the beginning of the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

There are three questions here, which really come to one. [Editorial interpolation.]^{xix} Would it be expected from an Epicurean concourse of efficient causes that states, like minute particles of matter in their chance contacts, should form all sorts of unions which in their turn are destroyed by new impacts, until once, finally, by chance a structure should arise which could maintain its existence—a fortunate accident that could hardly occur? Or are we not rather to suppose that Nature here follows a lawful course in gradually lifting our race from the lower levels of animality to the highest level of humanity, doing this by her own secret art, and developing in accord with her law all the original gifts of man in this apparently chaotic disorder?^{xx}

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here.⁴⁵ In other words, if we take the view of modern science, that is what Kant calls here the Epicurean view, as we have seen in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. From this point of view, there is no reason whatever to expect that there would be a *tendency* toward the just society. But if nature is teleological, then it would make sense. Now of course, Kant says, we cannot *know* that nature is teleological. We cannot know that. But the *assumption* that nature is teleological follows from the moral law. So on an amoral basis, on a scientific basis, there is no reason whatever to assume that⁴⁶ the human situation would ever become different from what it was. Let us turn to the beginning of the eighth thesis.

Mr. Reinken: “*The history of mankind can be seen—*”^{xxi}

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} In the original, this sentence is enclosed in square brackets. The phrase “editorial interpolation” is Mr. Reinken’s and was enclosed in square brackets by the editor.

^{xx} Ibid., 19-20.

^{xxi} Ibid., 21.

LS: “*Can*.” Can, can.

Mr. Reinken: “*Can* be seen—”

LS: Ya,⁴⁷ in other words,⁴⁸ Kant doesn’t say it *must* be seen that way. It can be seen, namely on the basis of the moral law, but⁴⁹ [there is] no theoretical necessity whatever. That’s the difference between Kant on the one hand, and Hegel and Marx on the other. Yes. The ninth proposition, the ninth thesis, will you read that?

Mr. Reinken:

A philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race must be regarded as possible and, indeed, as contributing to this end of Nature.^{xxii}

LS: Ya. But in other words, again, without the natural⁵⁰ teleology, a universal history would be impossible from Kant’s point of view. And the interesting question is, then, how Hegel’s doctrine is in its way teleological. But the clearer case would be that of Marx,⁵¹ and not only Marx but also Comte in a way,⁵² thinkers who reject teleology and nevertheless assume that there is a reasonable end to the historical development and therefore, in retrospect at least, the historical process is a rational or reasonable process. That is harder for them. But this has not prevented them from asserting it.

There are some little points in the ninth thesis. There is a parenthesis when after he has spoken of the Romans and the barbarians—⁵³

Mr. Reinken: “(which will probably give law, eventually, to all the others)—”^{xxiii}

LS: Ya, which? What which? Our continent, meaning Europe, which probably will give laws to all others. The European continent. Now does this contradict Kant’s aspiration towards a universal league of nations? What does the *Communist Manifesto* say about Europe? You must read the *Communist Manifesto*! And even if the . . . were still fully standing . . . I would say it. And now what does the *Communist Manifesto* say about Europe? Yes?

Student: It says that Europe will achieve communism first if the conditions are right.

LS: Yes. In other words, the victory of communism is the victory of Europe, or British industry, French politics, and German philosophy combined. Just as the communist condition is the victory of the *city* over the countryside, it is the victory of Europe over the underdeveloped continents. Of course, America would be counted⁵⁴ to Europe if people like Kant and Marx—Kant could not have known sufficiently, and Marx could—but, no, I think that Marx speaks of the West, the Occident, not of Europe in the

^{xxii} Ibid., 23.

^{xxiii} Ibid., 24.

Communist Manifesto. Because after all, Marx was a contributor to the *Herald Tribune*,^{xxiv} wasn't he? [Students chuckle] Ya? Yes.

So philosophy of history that appears clearly, especially from the end, is the history of the human race viewed from a reasonable point of view, i.e., not viewed merely as the ups and downs, the irrational ups and downs of individuals and peoples, but as one process which as a whole is reasonable and rational. And this is of course⁵⁵ preserved by Hegel, but in Hegel⁵⁶ it is a theoretical insight. For Kant it is ultimately a moral postulate. Good.

Now this much about this first piece, and now let us turn to Kant's review of Herder's ideas of *A Philosophy of History of Mankind*. It is interesting that Herder still in the title calls it⁵⁷ *Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, because the normal histories were of course histories of individual nations and not of the history of mankind. Yes. Now let us⁵⁸ observe a little bit of the way in which Kant goes about it. Read the second sentence, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

It can therefore be judged as little according to ordinary standards as many others from his prolific pen. It is as if his genius—^{xxv}

LS: "Prolific" is not here. [I mean, it is possible that my edition of the German is defective; I have a very old edition].⁵⁹ But there was nothing in my edition of a "prolific pen." Ya. But it would be interesting to see whether the translator did not [add it].⁶⁰ All right.

Mr. Reinken:

It is as if his genius did not simply assemble ideas out of the wide range of arts and sciences in order to add them to other intelligible ideas, but as if he transformed them according to a certain law of assimilation (to borrow his own expression) peculiar to him in his particular manner of thinking. Thus they are markedly differentiated from those through which other minds are nourished and thrive^{xxvi} and thus become less capable of being communicated.^{xxvii}

LS: Yes. This is an opening pass. Kant is very polite, I think, and you have done less than justice to his politeness. But he makes it as clear as polite[ly] as he can that Herder is not, as we would say today, a scientific or rational writer because he looks at it from *his own* point of view. He is individualistic and therefore decisively not communicable. I mean, of course one can read what Herder says, but it can never be proven because of the specificity, the individuality of his point of view.⁶¹

^{xxiv} The *New York Herald Tribune*, known as the *New-York Daily Tribune* at the time of Marx's contributions.

^{xxv} Kant, *Reviews of Herder's Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, 27.

^{xxvi} In original: "(p. 292)"

^{xxvii} Ibid.

And the common basis of Kant and Herder is, as has become clear from Mr. . . . 's paper, both argue on the basis of a natural teleology. That is common to them. Herder differs from that; we will see later in what way. The point which Herder makes, and which is not quite acceptable to Kant, is that man is the microcosm, a thought which⁶² appears fairly clearly from the quotations of Kant.

On page 31, at the beginning of the second paragraph.⁶³ "Not because of ostensible reason." Do you have that? Page 31.⁶⁴

Mr. Reinken:

Upright posture and the rational use of his limbs were not allotted to man because he was destined to be a rational creature; on the contrary, he acquired reason by virtue of his erect stature as the natural effect of that stature which was necessary merely to make him walk upright.^{xxviii}

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here. That is the first almost explicit criticism⁶⁵ of Herder which Kant makes. For Kant it make much more sense to start from man's rationality and to make this the key to man's upright posture, whereas Herder starts the other way around. Well,⁶⁶ whose side in this controversy would Aristotle take in this point? The upright posture the key to rationality, or the rationality the key to the upright posture? What do you think? Yes?

Student: Kant . . .

LS: Yes, sure, ya. So, in other words, the issue is a bit broader than Kant/Herder. Much more . . . Yes. And now let us turn to page⁶⁷ 33, the second paragraph.⁶⁸ "All this makes for the immortality of the soul and not only⁶⁹ for that, but also for the continuation of all."

Mr. Reinken:

all active and animate forces of the created world. Force cannot perish even though its organ may be disarranged. Whatever the omnipresent life-giver summoned to life lives; whatever acts, acts eternally in the eternal scheme.^{xxix}

LS: End of the quotation. Go on.

Mr. Reinken: "These principles are not analyzed 'because this is not the place for it.'"^{xxx}

LS: That is another criticism⁷⁰ by Kant you see. This should be stated and articulated much more clearly, and not merely asserted. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxviii} Ibid., 31.

^{xxix} Ibid., 33.

^{xxx} Ibid.

However, “In matter we observe so many spirit-like forces that a complete contrast and opposition between these two essences, spirit and matter, so very distinct, seems, if not self-contradictory, at least completely undemonstrated.”^{xxxix}

LS: Yes.⁷¹ Now we see gradually what the quotations mean. The quotations are categorizations of Herder. It’s not merely as, say, an ordinary reviewer⁷² who would give the reader [an] impression of what the book is about; Kant also categorizes the book by the very quotations. Yes.

On page 35, bottom. Let me see, on page 35, the quotation: “And probably.” You see line 2, and then a little bit later on, “also probably,” ya? And what Kant means by this is of course to say these are all assertions of probabilities. These are not in any way true assertions. Yes. We don’t have to go into all of that. Page 31, that is in your translation page 35 and the *Akademie* edition page 52. Do you have that?

Mr. Reinken:

“Still man should not peer into his future situation, but just believe in it.”^{xxxix}

LS: No, he should not try to look into his future state, but⁷³ believe into it, is what Herder says. Now,⁷⁴ what does Kant say to that?

Mr. Reinken:

(But how, if he once believes that he is able to look into it^{xxxix} can he be restrained from seeking to make use of this ability now and then?)

LS: So in other words, that is the old story we know from the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*. [Our] only access to the ultimate mystery of life and human life is the moral law. The only key we have, and the attempt to try to *look* into these mysteries, instead⁷⁵ [living] in obedience to the moral law,⁷⁶ will be ruinous. Yes? Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

“This much is certain, that in each of his powers lies an infinity; the forces of the universe, too, seem concealed in his soul, and only an organism, or a series of them, is required to allow it to pass over into actuality and exercise . . . Just as the flower stood forth and terminated the realm of subterranean, still lifeless creation in an upright form—”^{xxxix}

LS: Underline.⁷⁷ I believe it was underlined by Kant, but I have not been able to check.

Mr. Reinken: “so stands man erect, in his turn,—”^{xxxv}

^{xxxix} Ibid.

^{xxxix} Ibid., 35.

^{xxxix} In original: “gaze therein”

^{xxxix} Ibid. Ellipsis in the original.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

LS: Again underlined. So in other words,⁷⁸ the upright posture of man was taken to be the key to his rationality, and now we heard from the same Herder that the plants also have an upright posture, and then we should assume that they are all rational. That's⁷⁹ Kant's subtle joke, but of course⁸⁰ the joke is not unmerited. But on the other hand, there is this amazing thing, that we,⁸¹ the humans, are in a way between plants and animals because of the upright posture which we share with the plants . . . and on the other hand, with the nobility and so on, which our lower brethren, our dumb friends . . . [Students chuckle] Yes. Now, read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The idea and final purpose of Part One (I say One as there is the likelihood of several subsequent volumes of the work)—^{xxxvi} [Students chuckle]

LS: No, not “a likelihood,” “as it seems.” As it seems.

Mr. Reinken: “as it seems—”

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:⁸² The idea of Part One

consists in the following. The spiritual nature of the human soul, its permanence and progress toward perfection, is to be proved by analogy with the natural forms of matter, particularly in their structure, with no recourse to metaphysics.^{xxxvii}

LS: Yes.⁸³ And this Kant regards as wholly preposterous. In other words, Herder is in a way a continuator of traditional metaphysics, but he is also opposed to it. And the principle of this intermediate position, between traditional metaphysics and what he is aiming at, is never made clear by Herder, at least in this writing.

In the sequel Kant questions Herder's proof of the immortality of the individual. Now let us see. On page 37, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Hence there is not the least resemblance between the gradient progression in the very same man who is ever ascending to a more perfect structure in another life and the ladder which one may conceive among completely different types and individuals in the realm of nature.^{xxxviii}

LS: Now that is of course crucial for Kant's criticism of Herder. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxxvi} Ibid., 36.

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} Ibid., 37.

Here nature allows us to see nothing else than that it abandons individuals to complete destruction and only maintains the type.^{xxxix}

LS: The species. Ya.

Mr. Reinken: Species.

But then we demand to know if the soul of man will also survive his destruction here on earth; this can be concluded perhaps on moral—or if you like metaphysical—grounds, but never by any kind of analogy to visible creation.^{xl}

LS: Because there is no visible analogy for it. And a little bit later in the same paragraph. “But what shall one think—”

Mr. Reinken:

of this hypothesis of invisible forces acting on the organism; and then, how should we regard the design which aims to explain that which one does not comprehend by that which one comprehends even less?^{xli}

LS: Ya. That is a sound principle, ya. Would you admit that?

Student: Yes.

LS: Ya, good. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

As to the former [invisible forces]^{xlii} we can at least still recognize the law by means of experience—^{xliii}

LS: The laws, ya.

Mr. Reinken: Laws. “—although, of course, the causes themselves remain unknown: but—”^{xliv}

LS: In other words,⁸⁴ as Newton said, we know gravitation[’s] attraction, but we do not know its why, ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

but of the latter because even experience is denied us. What can the philosopher now invoke here to justify his allegations except simple despair of finding clarification in some kind of knowledge of nature and the attendant necessity to

^{xxxix} Ibid.

^{xl} Ibid.

^{xli} Ibid.

^{xlii} “Invisible forces” is Mr. Reinken’s addition.

^{xliii} Ibid.

^{xliv} Ibid.

seek it in the fertile field of the poetic imagination? But this is still metaphysics, and what is more, very dogmatic metaphysics, even though our author renounces it, as fashion demands.^{xlv}

LS: Ya, now he becomes harsher as he goes on. In other words, metaphysics was quite unpopular in the world in the second half of the eighteenth century. The period of the French *philosophes*, with its antimetaphysical—by Voltaire, you know? And Herder, who had less to do with this rationalist movement than Kant, but in a way, he follows it. That was at least Kant's impression. Yes. Now in the next paragraph, when he mentions in the text page 141.

Mr. Reinken:

But the unity of the organic⁸⁵ force^{xlvi} as self-constituting with respect to the manifold of all organic creatures and as subsequently acting upon organs according to their differences so as to establish their many genera and species, is an Idea which lies wholly outside the field of empirical natural science. This Idea of organic force belongs solely to speculative philosophy;—^{xlvii}

LS: Ya, or at any rate, it belongs to the solely speculative philosophy.

Mr. Reinken: Solely speculative.

LS: *Solely* speculative, ya.

Mr. Reinken: To purely speculative philosophy.

but if it were to gain entry even there, it would cause great havoc among accepted conceptions. To want to determine what arrangement of the head, externally with respect to its shape, and internally with respect to its brain, is necessarily connected with the propensity toward an upright posture; still more, to want to determine how a simple organization directed solely to this end could contain the ability to reason—^{xlviii}

LS: “Could contain the ground of the rational faculty.”

Mr. Reinken:⁸⁶

(a pursuit therefore in which the beast participates)—that patently exceeds all human reason. For reason, thus conceived, totters in the top rung of the physiological ladder and is on the point of taking metaphysical wing.^{xlix}

LS: Yes. Now but here is a bit more difficult.⁸⁷ I mean, granted that Kant is right when he says you cannot deduce man's rationality from his upright posture, but if you have to start

^{xlv} Ibid., 37-38.

^{xlvi} In original: “(p. 141)”

^{xlvii} Ibid.

^{xlviii} Ibid., 38-39.

^{xlix} Ibid., 39.

in the empirical science of man, anatomy, physiology and so on, from man's rationality as something irreducible, could this not conceivably throw light on the particular character of his brain? Of his hands? In this respect Kant goes, I think, much too far, and away from Aristotle, who would of course say that there is a connection between the fact that we have hands and not claws. There is a connection between that and our being [a] rational being.⁸⁸ In other words⁸⁹ Kant, in his sympathy with modern mechanical science and his antipathy to anything to be called naturalism, is for this reason opposed to Herder. Let us go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Despite these remonstrances all credit ought not be denied this very thoughtful work. There is one remarkable thing about it—⁹¹

LS: Ya, you see, this is really a fantastic criticism, but so quietly . . . Not *all* merit should be denied to this so thoughtful work. Ya? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

one remarkable thing about it (not to mention here the reflections so eloquently expressed that they testify to noble and sincere thought): this is the courage with which its author knew how to overcome the suspicions of this profession with respect—^{li}

LS: Of *his* profession—

Mr. Reinken: His profession. That's what I thought.

LS: Ya. No, "of his estate" would be more literal translation, and that is a reference to⁹⁰ Herder being a clergyman. In other words, Kant will say that, although he is a clergyman, with the peculiar dangers to which clergyman are exposed. All human estates are exposed to dangers, of course, but Herder is unusually free from that. This is a point he thought worth mentioning. And you see from the sequel that some clergymen, I mean smaller clergymen and not men⁹¹ of the genius of Herder, had taken up the defense of Herder against Kant,⁹² of which Kant takes care in the sequel. We might perhaps have a look at that. Now on page 40, when he⁹³ [mentions that] he, namely Kant, believes to know the materials for anthropology, anthropology here in the wide eighteenth century sense where it means the empirical knowledge of man. You have that?

Mr. Reinken: Yes.

LS: And Kant himself has written such an anthropology and gave lecture courses on this subject regularly, so Kant knew his way there. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

¹ Ibid.

^{li} Ibid.

As the reviewer believes, however, that he knows pretty well the materials involved in anthropology and also something of its methods in undertaking a history of humanity in the whole scope of its destiny, he is convinced that it must be sought neither in metaphysics nor in the armory of specimens for a natural history by means of the comparison of the skeleton of man with that of other animal species. Least of all could such a comparison inform us of man's destination in another world;—^{lii}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So Kant opposes Herder's concern with the body of man as the key to man's essence. And the strongest statement is of course that where Herder tries to deduce man's rationality from his upright posture, and he says least of all, of course, can we find out anything about the destiny of man in another world by a study of his skeleton. This, I think, is a quite strong statement.

Later on, page 42, line 4 following. "The clergy."

Mr. Reinken:

Moreover the clergyman finds the merit we ascribed to the book for freedom of thought much too common for such a celebrated author. Undoubtedly he means by that the *external* freedom which, because it depends upon time and place, has no merit at all.^{liii}

LS: Well, that's clear. I mean, today there is no merit in saying everything you please, in every language, however odd you please. [That] has no merit. In other times, say, under a dictatorship, it is a different story.⁹⁴ But Kant had in mind that inner freedom. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

which is unfettered by customary concepts and current modes of thought reinforced by public opinion, a freedom which is so utterly uncommon that even those who regard themselves as philosophers have only rarely been able to rise to it.^{liv}

LS: Yes. Nothing could be truer. Good. And now we come to the second part.⁹⁵ Let us turn to page 45 in your translation, third paragraph, line 5 following, when he speaks of the sixth and seventh books of Herder's ideas.⁹⁶

Mr. Reinken:

It is not our intention here to pick out or analyze any of the bountiful number of beautiful passages rich in poetic eloquence which will recommend themselves to every reader of feeling. But just briefly we want to question whether the poetic—
^{lv}

^{lii} Ibid., 40.

^{liii} Ibid., 42.

^{liv} Ibid.

^{lv} Ibid., 45.

LS: No, no. “But as little do we wish to examine—”

Mr. Reinken: But as little?

LS: Ya, according to my German text. Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

[do] we want to question whether the poetic spirit that enlivens the expression does not sometimes also intrude into the author’s philosophy; whether synonyms are not valued as definitions here and there and allegories as truths;—^{lvi}

LS: So on and so on. Kant could not be more explicit now, as you know. Now let us turn to page 46, line 12 from bottom.⁹⁷ “Nor do we examine.”

Mr. Reinken:

we will not inquire whether the stream of his eloquence does not involve him occasionally in contradictions.^{lvii}

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[For] we are told that inventors must often leave more of the profit of their discovery to posterity than they themselves retain. Does this not exemplify the confirmation of the principle that the natural tendencies of man, which apply to the use of his reason, were intended to be completely developed only in the species, but not in the individual? The author is inclined to consider this principle,^{lviii} along with others deriving from it, although he does not quite grasp them correctly, as almost an offense to the majesty of nature (which others prosaically call blasphemy). All of these details we must leave untouched, mindful of the limits which are fixed for us.^{lix}

LS: Yes. Now let us see. In the next paragraph, at the beginning he speaks of⁹⁸ a historical, critical mind who must study the history of mankind; and Kant, of course, cannot do that⁹⁹ because he claims to—. Now we cannot—let me see, page 48, the second paragraph, where he begins to speak of the eighth book.

Mr. Reinken:

A new line of thought begins in the eighth Book which continues to the end of this section and contains the origin of the education of man who is conceived as a rational and moral creature, consequently the commencement of all culture. In the author’s opinion this is not to be sought in the power peculiar to the human species, but completely outside

^{lvi} Ibid.

^{lvii} Ibid., 46.

^{lviii} In original: “p. 206”

^{lix} Ibid., 46-47.

it in an understanding of and instruction by other natures. As a result, all progress in culture would only be a projected communication and fortuitous proliferation of an original tradition. It is to this and not to himself that man would have to attribute all of his progress toward wisdom. Since the reviewer, if he sets foot outside of nature and the path that reason offers to knowledge, feels quite helpless, and since he is altogether inexperienced in scholarly philology and the knowledge or critical examination of ancient documents, he is completely incompetent to make philosophic use of the facts that are related and verified in that branch of knowledge. Thus he concedes that he could hold no opinion on this point.^{lx}

LS: Ya, let us stop here for a moment. In the earlier writing he had said something about the principles of historical criticism regarding historical documents. Do you remember that? Who read that paper? Mr. Harper isn't here.¹⁰⁰ What does Kant say there about the right procedure regarding the evaluation of ancient texts?

Student: I don't know, I don't remember the passage.

LS: Does he not quote there Hume?

Same Student: I don't think I know the passage.

LS: Does he not quote Hume there?

Same Student: Oh, yes.

LS: I see. Good.

Same Student: I remember now.

LS: Ya, good.

Same Student: In the footnote. Yeah.¹⁰¹

LS: Well, the footnotes are also part of the work [students chuckle], if written by the author.¹⁰²

Same Student: He says that¹⁰³ according to Hume¹⁰⁴ the first page of Thucydides was the first, the only beginning of real history; so I suppose that¹⁰⁵ he eliminates Herodotus.

LS:¹⁰⁶ Herodotus is very uninteresting to Kant. But what is—

Same Student: Thucydides I guess would be . . .

^{lx} Ibid., 48-49.

Mr. Reinken: Or is it that it's only with the Greeks that history begins, and he even has the suggestion that the Jewish history begins with the *Septuagint*, when a Greek king ordered the Bible translated.

LS: So in other words,¹⁰⁷ Genesis is not a history; it's myth, as they say today. That is what he means. And he, in a polite way, here suggests that the poor reviewer cannot make these assertions to which Herder feels entitled. Yes. And now a bit later where you left off, Mr. Reinken, "and the author expresses the foundation—"

Mr. Reinken:¹⁰⁸

the basis of his own personal opinion (including the footnote): "This didactic history (of Moses) relates that the first created men participated in the teaching of Elohim and that—"¹⁰⁹

LS: Ya, but "*Elohim*,"¹⁰⁹ that's the Hebrew word for God, but Herder uses it here, [which]¹¹⁰ is grammatically possible as a plural;¹¹¹ i.e., if you want to translate it then you would have to say, "the gods." . . . god.

Mr. Reinken: Would be very classical. "and that with His—"¹¹²

LS: No, and see, we don't have to read the rest. In other words, what Kant here suggests is this: you, our fine theologian, you refer to that most ancient document, and to the original tradition of mankind available in the Bible,¹¹² and you bring all kinds of things incompatible with theology, you end up . . .

Well,¹¹³ I never read Teilhard de Chardin,¹¹⁴ the famous writer in our age in France (and also translated in English), but from what I have read in some reviews, I have the impression that there is something in common between Herder. Do you see my point? And Teilhard de Chardin, who is¹¹⁴ (well, he is no longer alive)¹¹⁵ very informed about the state of the problem of evolution and also the history of mankind, so he has the necessary competence but then he connects this with a theology, a theological eschatology. And the¹¹⁶ [apparent] disproportion between the part which is at least today generally recognized if not truly demonstrated, and the other part which is in no way generally recognized, is so striking. I think there is a certain parallel to that here.

Now let us read a bit further on. Ya, and then Herder takes issue with the sentence in Kant which you read: "Man is a beast which needs a master." And Herder says this is a wicked or evil proposition, and Kant very modestly tries to explain what he means and to show that it is not a wicked proposition, but [he] admits this proposition is therefore not as wicked as Herder means. Period, dash. "It is possible that a wicked man has said it." Period, dash. So Kant doesn't claim too much goodness for himself. Well,¹¹⁷ we have to read it, of course, because it is one of the few documents of Kant's philosophy of history,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin S.J. (1881-1955), French Jesuit priest and philosopher. Teilhard's work in paleontology and geology brought him into conflict with his superiors in the Church.

but it is much less revealing, as you must have seen, than the writing which Kant composed a year earlier which we discussed last time. Yes?

Student: With regard to what you said at the beginning of the class about the evolution of the species, it seems to me that there was a real issue between Kant and Herder regarding the evolution of the species. Kant was arguing that Herder seems to suggest that man is indeed evolved from these other species.

LS: That I don't think, and—

Same Student: For instance in the footnote—

LS: The footnote you mean by Kant, or by the editor?

Same Student: No.¹¹⁸ It was a point where¹¹⁹ Kant said about Herder that this theory could lead to only one of two consequences which the mind finds monstrous, one of which is that man is evolved—

LS: Well, may I say one thing?

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: This ladder of which Kant speaks,¹²⁰ you know, a ladder of the various species of plants and animals, that does not necessarily mean evolution. As late as Hegel in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences*, when he speaks of this order, the order of steps, how do you say, *Stufenleiter*?

Student: Stepladder.

LS: Ya, but it is . . . the stepladder . . .

Student: The great chain of being? [Laughter]

LS: . . . say . . . the chain of being. The chain only lacks the ascending character, ya? The chain does not necessarily . . . And [what] Hegel says there, when he speaks of this ladder of beings in ascending order,¹²¹ this must not be understood in the sense of what we now call evolution. Because Herder wrote already after Lamarck, that is a different story.¹²² The fact that he admits a ladder does not mean that he means an evolution from one species to another.

Student: He says on page 38 that what Herder says—

LS: Now one moment.

Same Student: “leads to ideas so monstrous, i.e., either one species would have emerged out of the other—”

LS: Now where, precisely? In the second paragraph? Which line?

Same Student: No. Line 54 in the German . . .

Mr. Reinken:

There is only one relationship among them, but this would lead to ideas which are so monstrous that reason recoils from them: either one species would have emerged out of the other and¹²³ all out of one single original species, or perhaps all would have emerged out of a single primordial womb.^{lxiv}

LS: Ya, but this would only mean that Kant rejects *a priori* evolution in the Lamarck-Darwinian sense, and he does not prove at all that Herder had asserted it. He says it would lead to it.

Student: Is not his point though that there could have—

LS: Well, let me see what—

Mr. Reinken: There is this footnote by Beck¹²⁴ where he claims that Kant misquotes Herder and that¹²⁵ Kant's case against Herder rests partly on imputing to—

LS: I did not investigate, but he surely doesn't assert that either Kant or Herder spoke about evolution¹²⁶ in the Lamarck-Darwinian sense.

Mr. Reinken: Well, the emerging transformations and revolutions of the one into the other is, according to Beck, being read by Kant into Herder; that is, both would disown it, but—

LS: Ya, sure. Now that is what I meant. But—

Mr. Reinken: Kant is . . .

LS: I would have to look up the Herder's original, which I did not do. But as far as I know, there is nothing of this kind in Herder. And how they thought of this, well, we have one famous and well-known discussion.¹²⁷ I mean, there is of course first the doctrine of creation in the Bible,¹²⁸ according to which each species is created as fundamentally unchangeable by God. This was one famous view. The alternative was the Epicurean doctrine, which we know especially from Lucretius and which was prepared by Democritus and other thinkers. And here we have indeed a non-creation of the species. But all species emerged at the same time in the formative period of the earth when everything was still fluid, so to speak. And the characteristic point of the evolutionist's doctrine is an emergence of the species out of the species. And as far as I know, and¹²⁹ I'm not a specialist in that field, but as far as I know the first man who proposed such a thing was Diderot.

^{lxiv} Ibid., 38.

So what you had at all times, and especially in the eighteenth century, the century of reform, was an arrangement of the species in an ascending order, naturally. But this did not mean an emergence of the higher out of the lower. The question became—I do not know whether some people have not thought of it before. I do not know, I have never read the history of the idea of evolution in our sense.¹³⁰ I know only this classic text of Lucretius summarizing the ancient thought on the subject.

The problem didn't arise of course for Aristotle, because of the eternity of the species—the eternity of the world and therefore the eternity of the species. Only people who denied the eternity of the world¹³¹ were compelled to think of the origin of the species. But if you think the book title of Darwin, *The Origin of the Species*, and translate it into Greek: *genesis ton eideōn*, how funny this sounds, that the *eidei*, the forms, the classes as such, would have come into being. That the individuals come into being and perish, that was a matter of daily experience and therefore not in need of a discovery.

¹ Deleted “Now...and...”

² Deleted “Herder was...”

³ Deleted “one...”

⁴ Deleted “there is...”

⁵ Deleted “going into...into...without making...”

⁶ Deleted “That there was something...”

⁷ Deleted “and he...”

⁸ Deleted “in a very...”

⁹ Deleted “of a...”

¹⁰ Deleted “I don't.”

¹¹ Deleted “had said...”

¹² Deleted “this is not...”

¹³ Deleted “in the...”

¹⁴ Deleted “so the evolution...”

¹⁵ Deleted “is...”

¹⁶ Deleted “does...”

¹⁷ Deleted “That...the...”

¹⁸ Deleted “Here of course...do you...”

¹⁹ Deleted “has some...”

²⁰ Deleted “than Kant does...”

²¹ Deleted “Now let us...”

²² Deleted “the writing...”

²³ Deleted “with...”

²⁴ Deleted “we came to the...we...”

²⁵ Deleted “fifth.”

²⁶ Deleted “this is...”

²⁷ Deleted “is...is”

²⁸ Deleted “they have this...”

²⁹ Deleted “Now the point which is...”

³⁰ Deleted “which you can...”

³¹ Deleted “freedom...”

³² Deleted “i.e.”

³³ Deleted “affect...”

³⁴ Deleted “Yeah, let us stop here. Good. And now...no, let us go on.”

³⁵ Deleted “So Kant, in other...”

³⁶ Deleted “There must be...without a universal...”

³⁷ Deleted “without...”

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- 38 Deleted “that you must have such an....”
- 39 Deleted “if there are not...if the....”
- 40 Deleted **Reinken:** ‘Is—’ **LS:** No, no, we don’t have to read that..”
- 41 Deleted “in the....”
- 42 Deleted “a perfect polity....”
- 43 Deleted “domestic....”
- 44 Deleted “without any....”
- 45 Deleted “Now this is a point...that....”
- 46 Deleted “human....”
- 47 Deleted “that is....”
- 48 Deleted “there is no...there is no....”
- 49 Deleted “and not...it’s not....”
- 50 Deleted “theology....”
- 51 Deleted “which....”
- 52 Deleted “which.”
- 53 Deleted **Reinken:** ‘which will probably—’ **LS:** Yes? No, no, you must—”
- 54 Deleted “Europe....”
- 55 Deleted “this is.”
- 56 Deleted “the....”
- 57 Deleted “*History*....”
- 58 Deleted “see....”
- 59 Changed from “I mean, it is possible...I have a very old edition that this is a...this...my edition is...of the German is defective.”
- 60 The German: “*Sie dürfte also wohl eben so wenig, als manche andere aus seiner Feder geflossene nach dem gewöhnlichen Maßstabe beurtheilt werden können.*” (AK 8:45).
- 61 Deleted “Now....”
- 62 Deleted “is developed....”
- 63 Deleted **Reinken:** ‘Upright posture and the—’
- 64 Deleted **Reinken:** In the English? **LS:** Yeah, in the English. **Reinken:** Oh. I...yeah...I [inaudible words] alone. Sorry.”
- 65 Deleted “of Kant....”
- 66 Deleted “what....”
- 67 Deleted “32....”
- 68 Deleted **Reinken:** [inaudible words] ‘These principles are not analyzed “because this is not the place for it.” However, ’ more quote— **LS:** Now one moment. Yeah. [inaudible words] this. **Reinken:** [inaudible words] [students chuckle] **LS:** Yes. Let us...now read the preceding sentence: ‘All,’ a quote from Herder, ‘All this—’ **Reinken:** ‘whatever the omnipresent—’ **LS:** No, no.”
- 69 Deleted “for it....”
- 70 Deleted “of Kant....”
- 71 Deleted “As...and Kant is....”
- 72 Deleted “would....”
- 73 Deleted “believe it....”
- 74 Deleted “what Kant....”
- 75 Deleted “of in obedience to the moral...moral law...instead of...to live.”
- 76 Deleted “will...will...will lead....”
- 77 Deleted “Whether it was....”
- 78 Deleted “first Kant...the uprightness....”
- 79 Deleted “a....”
- 80 Deleted “there is some....”
- 81 Deleted “are....”
- 82 Deleted “Seems....”
- 83 Deleted “And Kant...and Kant is...yes....”
- 84 Deleted “we....”
- 85 Deleted “force—’ **LS:** Yeah.”
- 86 Deleted “contain the ground of the rational....”

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- 87 Deleted "Why should...."
- 88 Deleted "That...."
- 89 Deleted "this is...."
- 90 Deleted "Hegel's being clergyman, in other words...."
- 91 Deleted "like...."
- 92 Deleted "of which he takes...."
- 93 Deleted "speaks...that...since."
- 94 Deleted "So what he is concerned is...."
- 95 Deleted "We have to...."
- 96 Deleted "**Reinken**: 'Books Six and Seven for the most part—' **LS**: No, the next sentence. We don't have to—"
- 97 Deleted "**Reinken**: 'On p. 248 for—' **LS**: Yeah, he insists. Yeah. Yes."
- 98 Deleted "a historical, critical head...."
- 99 Deleted "for...."
- 100 Deleted "You must heard...what does he say there...."
- 101 Deleted "**LS**: Yes— **Same Student**: Where he—"
- 102 Deleted "**Same Student**: Yeah, I found it. **LS**: Yeah."
- 103 Deleted "the...saying the...."
- 104 Deleted "Thucydides...."
- 105 Deleted "**LS**: What does he—"
- 106 Deleted "What does he...I mean that...."
- 107 Deleted "the...."
- 108 Deleted "Frankly...oh."
- 109 Deleted "is...."
- 110 Deleted "what."
- 111 Deleted "With the...."
- 112 Deleted "and what...."
- 113 Deleted "I think...."
- 114 Deleted "also...is...."
- 115 Deleted "he is perfectly...."
- 116 Deleted "apparently."
- 117 Deleted "this is...."
- 118 Deleted "Maybe it wasn't a...it was a...it was a point at which Kant...ah no, [inaudible words]."
- 119 Deleted "Herder said...oh."
- 120 Deleted "that...."
- 121 Deleted "that...."
- 122 Deleted "That doesn't...."
- 123 Deleted "**LS**: 'all—'"
- 124 Deleted "**LS**: Yeah?"
- 125 Deleted "he later makes use...."
- 126 Deleted "in the Lamarck-Kantian sense...."
- 127 Deleted "There...."
- 128 Deleted "in which...."
- 129 Deleted "I have no...."
- 130 Deleted "You would find...."
- 131 Deleted "could...."

Session 11: May 9, 1967

Leo Strauss: [It was] wise of youⁱ to consider Rousseau himself, with whom Kant takes issue here explicitly, as we have seen. But you missed something which is immediately more important. This thesis called conjectural history of the origin of mankind or¹ the conjectural origin of mankind.² And you give³ the reason explicitly given by Kant as to why it must be conjectural. Because⁴ an account of the origin of man as man must be the account of the origin of morality. And morality cannot emerge out of non-morality. That's the difficulty. Ya, but⁵ there is another reason why Kant calls his account conjectural. What is the immediate basis of that conjectural account given by Kant?

Student: He says in the first part that it is impossible without knowledge of the history, without records, to have anything but conjectures.

LS: Ya,⁶ all right, but does he not have a record which he follows?

Same Student: The scripture.

LS: You didn't say a word about that. In other words, last time we considered⁷ Kant's critique of Herder, and Herder had made a great use of the oldest document of history by which he meant the Bible, Old Testament. Now this is⁸ in a way Kant's reply to Herder: You use the Bible as an authoritative text although you are—that he wouldn't have said—although you are no longer entitled to do so since you are not an orthodox Lutheran. Now, but the Bible cannot be an authoritative text, for the first page of history is where?

Same Student: After reason has already—

LS: No, no. More simply. Where do we find the first historical text according to Kant? Okay.

Student: Thucydides.⁹

LS: Thucydides, sure, but he quotes Hume. So in other words, the account which follows the biblical account is bound to be conjectural, given the non-authoritative and non-historical character of that account. Number 1.

Number 2: Kant interprets the biblical account regardless of whether it stems from the tenth century or the fourth century, interprets it in a way wholly different from the clear *meaning* of the text. That there was a fall of Adam and Eve is hardly mentioned. What is according to the traditional view the Fall is, according to Kant, a great progress, a blessing, to mention only one among many other things.

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Now this side of the Kantian argument you disregarded, and I think that it is very important. I mean, you brought out the things quite rightly which¹⁰ have to do with the center of Kant's teaching, but it is not unimportant to consider, especially with a view to the fact that Kant wrote a couple of years later this writing on *Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason*, to see what liberties he takes with the biblical text¹¹ when trying to find reason in it. He changes the meaning completely. Yes.

Now of course, according to the traditional view, say, such a phenomenon like war and other evils are a consequence of the Fall. They are evils, but the root of these evils is not a defect of the creator but due to man's original sin. This one must have in mind in order to understand Kant's thesis. Wars and other evils are *boons*¹² compared with the condition of South Sea islanders, the state of paradise—he discusses that explicitly. That would be exactly what Kant does not want to have: a merely happy human race without the development of its faculties. Now of course the Bible doesn't imply that at first men did not have developed faculties. At least the traditional [view, for] both Jews and Christians, I believe, is that Adam was perfect prior to the Fall. But Kant does not accept that, in the first place, and the development of the faculties requires *evil* as an incentive to a higher state. Yes. I think I leave it at these remarks about your paper in general. Thank you again.

So now, Miss . . . , yes. I read your paper, it was quite satisfactory. Now I would like to add only one point,¹³ of which I thought . . . Kant's position in his critique of Herder, I said last time, is somehow between Aristotle and Herder, ya? In other words,¹⁴ Aristotle would say that it is possible and necessary to understand more of man's physic, his physique, by starting from his rationality than Kant could grant.

Now, in this connection I would like to draw your attention to a present-day biologist. Some of you may have read him, Adolf Portmann, a Swiss biologist.ⁱⁱ At least one of his works has been translated into English, I believe even in a paperback.ⁱⁱⁱ And Portmann¹⁵ doesn't say it and probably would not admit it, but his approach to the whole problem of man, the biological problem, is Aristotelian in spirit. It is very interesting. It is a rare case, and goes much further than Kant would grant in elucidating bodily phenomena by man's rationality, by man's peculiarity.¹⁶

And now¹⁷ let us turn to this writing, yes. I think that it is now necessary¹⁸ to remind ourselves of the broad context, of the broad context even if this will take ten minutes or so—because we must not always be rushed,¹⁹ because otherwise²⁰ we will forget to see the root of the tree.

Now these essays with which we are concerned here are devoted to philosophy of history. Philosophy of history in this original version—eighteenth century version at any rate, and even beyond that—tries to argue this question: Does the fate of man throughout the ages have a meaning? Does it point to a single goal? Is the history of mankind

ⁱⁱ Adolf Portmann (1897-1982).

ⁱⁱⁱ Strauss is probably referring to Portmann's *Animals as Social Beings* (1961).

eschatological?²¹ Kant doesn't speak of eschatology. He speaks of . . . millennialism, which has something to do with it.

Now this formulation, "Is the history of mankind eschatological?" points to the fact that philosophy of history in this early form is a modification of the biblical view, and which means that it does not originate in philosophy.²² Let me repeat again that philosophy of history is a relatively recent thing. It stems from the eighteenth century and it was prepared by something which has in itself²³ no relation to philosophy of history, namely, the great project of the seventeenth century as you find it in the writings of Bacon and Descartes. According to that view, particularly striking in perhaps Descartes's *Discourse on Method*, man, not nature or God, sets to himself an end to be achieved in a long process, in a long progress.

But in this stage, say, of Bacon and Descartes, this end—making man the master and owner of nature—is not the end of preceding history, of the history preceding the project. There is no question about that. This end is discovered as a sensible end by, say, Bacon and Descartes, and they think if people listen to him from now on there will be a steady progress toward the end. But²⁴ that is not the end of nature which was always effective. Philosophy of history means, however, an end which was effective from the very beginning and which does not originate in man's positing. Kant, in contradistinction to these earlier men, clearly says the end is *nature's* end.²⁵ Hegel says it is *reason's* end, but the reason of which Hegel speaks is not simply the reason of man, it is a reason with a capital "R"; and therefore it was effective from the very beginning, when men were wholly unable to use their reason in a proper way.

Now the predicament of Kant's philosophy of history in particular is that this philosophy of history is an important concern of Kant, but it does not belong to the core of his teaching. And this is a question with which we are particularly concerned. Why is this the case?²⁶ One must understand first Kant's central teaching, especially his moral teaching, before we can find an answer to that question.

Now²⁷ at the beginning of the course I referred to Kant's statement about what he owes to Rousseau, a much earlier utterance than the one which Mr. . . . read to us today. What he learned from Rousseau was to question the supremacy of theory, of theoretical philosophy or theoretical science. What he learned from Rousseau was to see the supremacy of practical reason, moral reason. And practical reason, which for Kant is the same as the will, is concerned with the rights of mankind, according to its early formulation of about 1762.

Now the word "rights" is characteristic. "Rights" means not the duties, and this shows that Kant is an heir to modern political philosophy as represented by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, who all start from²⁸ the fundamental right of man and regard the duties as derivative from that right. In Kant that is much more complicated, but nevertheless we will see that it ran through. Surely Kant makes a radical change within modern political philosophy, but it is nevertheless a radical change *within*²⁹ modern political philosophy; it is not a break with it.

Now let us remember a few points which we have made in the course of our study now. The first point which Kant makes is that he questions happiness as the end. Happiness, we may say using the present terminology, is radically subjective, and therefore cannot be made the principle as it was in Aristotle, in particular. Now Kant's predecessors, the men I mentioned, had some awareness of this difficulty, and therefore one can say they replaced³⁰ subjective happiness, which differs from individual to individual and within the individual from time to time, by the objective conditions of happiness—let us say, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the things which you need regardless of what you understand by happiness.

Now Kant does something corresponding, not identical. Kant says³¹ the conditions of happiness to which Hobbes and the others have referred derive their validity from happiness. We are not interested in the conditions of happiness for their own sake, and therefore these rules regarding the conditions of happiness can only be hypothetical imperatives. Morality, on the other hand, expresses itself in the categorical imperative and therefore has not, as such, anything to do with happiness. Morality can be said to be concerned with the *worthiness* of happiness, but not with happiness as such. That was the first point.

Now the second point. In the teachings of Kant's predecessors, the basis was the fundamental right of self-preservation from which³² every other moral fact has to be derived. Kant, as we have seen, makes *freedom* the basic right and therefore abandons self-preservation as the basic phenomenon. But³³ in this very important change from self-preservation to freedom, again a fundamental point made by the modern philosophers remains preserved. I have spoken about it last time, but I believe I have not been clear enough. I distinguish two ways of limiting license in order to understand what freedom means. I distinguish between a horizontal and a vertical limitation. Now the vertical limitation would be from God, or from man's natural end, or anything comparable if there is an alternative. The horizontal limitation, however, is the one which comes from other human beings. The idea being that whether there is a natural end is doubtful; whether God is concerned with our action[s], punishes them or rewards them, we do not know. We may believe it, but we do not know. But this we do know: that³⁴ if you step on men's toes, they will react to that and will step on your toes. At least they are likely to. This is *effective*, whereas the vertical limitation is not effective. This peculiar "realism," so characteristic of modern thought since Machiavelli, is underlying this point. Men can be known and hence be depended upon to limit license, which you cannot say of nature and of God, according to this view.

Now as to the question of the philosophy of history in Kant, we have seen from Kant's statements on morality that the categorical imperative leads to the postulates of God (leads to, does not presuppose)³⁵ and the immortality of the soul, because morality means worthiness of being happy, and this worthiness hangs in the air if there is not a God and an afterlife. Now here in this sphere, no human being is ever sacrificed to the happiness of anybody else. Everyone will get what he deserves. And that of course is not known, but that is a matter of rational belief according to Kant.³⁶ This is the reason why the

immortality of the soul, and of course the existence of God, is a postulate of practical reason, whereas the philosophy of history is not in the same way a postulate of practical reason.

Now where does the philosophy of history come in? The moral law commands us to act in a certain manner, as you know. But to act means to act in this life. [LS taps on the table] Therefore, we cannot help being concerned with the this-worldly outcome of our actions, although the outcome is not the primary consideration. The primary consideration is the intrinsic goodness of the action. But you cannot help,³⁷ precisely if you are a moral man, to be concerned whether you contribute by your action to the betterment³⁸ of the human situation. You cannot help being concerned with the future of mankind.

Now a symbolic or, as Kant says, a typical formulation of the categorical imperative speaks³⁹ of nature and natural laws in the [teleological]^{iv} sense—that nature has destined man to such and such things. This teleological nature, which does not belong to the categorical imperative of morality strictly understood but to its symbolization, offers the key to the history of mankind. The history of mankind becomes reasonable, if we look at it from the point of view of an intention of nature. And that is what Kant tries to do in his philosophy of history. And we know already the end,⁴⁰ in Kant's sense: the universal state, i.e., the league of nations. A league of nations, if we try to speak politically, which would include also Red China [students chuckle], the Federal Republic of Germany, Eastern Germany, but according to some, not nationalist China, although one doesn't see why nationalist China should be excluded when these other states come in. But this only in passing. [Laughter]

Now the universal state is according to Kant the precondition of the just order in any particular society. That we have seen. What I did not say and what I should say is this: at this crucial point, the universal order, the universal just order as a precondition of the just order within any particular society, is one of the many things which are preserved in Marxism. Because according to the strict Marxist doctrine, modified for practical purposes by Stalin, you cannot have [laughter] socialism—yes, for practical reasons;⁴¹ I didn't say from practical reason in Kant's sense of the word [laughter]; let us say for pragmatic reasons—you cannot have socialism⁴² in one country, you know? In the . . . yes. Good.

Now this much [in order] that we remind ourselves of the broader issue. And now let us turn immediately to the Kantian writing.⁴³ [Kant] had referred,⁴⁴ on page 45 in this edition, and also on page 49,⁴⁵ to Herder's views on the Bible in a book called *The Oldest Document of the Human Race*,⁴⁶ meaning thereby the beginning of the Bible. Now this is exactly the subject of Kant. Kant gives a radically different interpretation of the oldest document, meaning the first few chapters of Genesis, than Herder has done.

He opens the essay with a remark that we can make only conjectures about the beginning of history. I think that that is still true—and⁴⁷ that is a point which⁴⁸ is made by Adolf

^{iv} Strauss might have said “theological” here, but the context suggests “teleological.”

Portmann in that book to which I referred—because we come back to certain tools on the one hand, found in graves or other places, and then we find earlier skeletons,⁴⁹ [craniums] and so on and so on. And⁵⁰ that this man had already language, for example or not, cannot appear from the⁵¹ [cranium]. Here this big gulf between the merely anatomical findings and the so-called cultural findings can never be bridged. Now Kant did not think this in these terms, of course, but the main point is that⁵² the beginning of mankind will always remain hypothetical. We will never find eyewitnesses⁵³ of this origin, and what we can find is in need of interpretation, which can never be made fully evident.

Now⁵⁴ only conjectures about the beginning of history are possible, and even these conjectures are possible only under certain conditions. And what are these conditions? That is interesting. He wants to know about the first beginning as made by nature, which excludes a theological account proper. And the next point, do you have that in the first paragraph, or maybe the second paragraph?

Mr. Reinken:

here one need not resort to fiction but can rely on experience, if only one presupposes that human actions were in the first beginning no better and no worse than we find them now—^v

LS: Ya. Do you see the great implication of that? “In the first beginning human actions were not better nor worse than now.” A denial of the Fall.⁵⁵ Because once you introduce the Fall, once you introduce the view that man was created perfect, you go beyond the limits set to reason and to reasonable conjectures. In other words, no miracles. Otherwise it would not be a possible explanation.

Kant makes clear then in the next paragraph that what he does is under no circumstances something serious. And the unseriousness has two levels, and the more interesting level is this, that Kant engages here in something which is not his business, namely, biblical exegesis. And he is the first to admit that it is not his business, as we have seen in his writing regarding Herder. On page 54, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: “Unless one is to indulge in irresponsible conjectures, one—”^{vi}

LS: “Irresponsible” is not in the German.⁵⁶ I was quite surprised, because the word “irresponsible” (or for that matter, “responsible”) in the meaning which is now used is, I think, a much later coinage. And in the present-day meaning of the term a “responsible” man is what formerly would have been called a conscientious man or a virtuous man. And it is an interesting question, why were people induced to avoid words like “conscientious” and “virtuous” and have the much less high-fallutin’ word “responsible”? That is an interesting question to which I think one should draw their attention. “If one does not wish to *schwärmen*,” what is that?

Mr. Reinken: Blather.

^v Kant, *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, 53.

^{vi} Ibid., 54.

LS: To fancy.⁵⁷ Good, ya. All right. Read this sentence.

Mr. Reinken: Unless one is to⁵⁸ babble in conjectures, one must start out with something which human reason cannot derive from prior natural causes—in the present case, the existence of man.^{vii}

LS: And so on and some other things. The existence of man cannot be explained. This alone might show, although it is not entirely conclusive, that Kant does not think of an evolutionary theory. You remember we discussed⁵⁹ that last time, when we found the term “evolution” occurring and when I mentioned that it does not mean evolution of the species, but only evolution of the individuals.

Kant makes clear⁶⁰ that he will discuss⁶¹ Genesis, chapter 2 to 6: i.e., he skips completely the first chapter. And he begins there, a little bit later where you read, Mr. Reinken. “I put this pair—”

Mr. Reinken: I put this pair into a place secure against the attack of wild beasts, a place richly endowed by nature with all means of nourishment and blessed with a perpetually mild climate, hence a garden, as it were.^{viii}

LS: “As it were.” You see that the literal understanding of the word “garden” is out. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: What is still more, I begin with this pair, not in the natural state with all its crudeness, but rather after it has already taken mighty steps in the skillful use of its powers. For if I were to attempt to fill this gap—which presumably encompasses a great space of time—there might be for the reader too many conjectures and too few probabilities. The first man, then, was able to stand and walk; he could speak^{ix} and even discourse, i.e., speak according to coherent concepts,^x and hence think. These are all skills which he had to acquire for himself (for if he were created with them, he would also pass them on through heredity; but this contradicts experience). But I take him as already in possession of these skills. For my sole purpose is to consider the development of manners and morals^{xi} in his way of life, and these already presuppose the skills referred to.^{xii}

LS: Yes. Now man had to acquire these skills; they could not have been given to him, as they seem to be according to the Bible. In other words, there are no natural potentialities

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} In original: “(2:20)”

^x In original: “(2:23)”

^{xi} In original: “[des Settlichen]”

^{xii} Ibid., 54-55.

proper which would have to be actualized.⁶² Man was not created with such potentialities; he acquired the skills. This is of course all a tacit criticism of the Bible.

Man's morality, we see here, necessarily presupposes his being *actually reasoning*. The unconditioned moral law of which we have heard is not in every respect unconditional.⁶³ You must be a rational being in the first place, otherwise you cannot *hear* it. That is perhaps not quite trivial.

In the note which⁶⁴ you find at the bottom of this page, Kant makes a characteristic dig at pious people. Do you see? You might read the second sentence. He speaks here of the urge to communicate oneself, and then he says, "a similar effect of this urge—"

Mr. Reinken:

urge may be observed even now. Children and thoughtless persons are apt to disturb the thinking part of the community by rattling, shouting, whistling, singing and other kinds of noisy entertainment, often also by religious devotions of such a nature.^{xiii}

LS: No, no, "of such," namely, noisy.

Mr. Reinken: Yeah.

LS: Ya. This is only—well, you can say typical eighteenth century, ya? Some dig at religion. Yes. Now⁶⁵ in the following paragraph⁶⁶ Kant interprets the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And⁶⁷ according to Kant that simply means man's instinctual aversion to unwholesome food. That was all there is to it. Well, you see, that suffices as an example.

Ya, and similarly, of course, he interprets the serpent in a non-biblical way. The serpent is simply reason, if a rather undeveloped reason, but better than the mere instinct which forbade the eating of the tree of knowledge that pre-existed the reason. I think for our purposes [it is] enough to read Kant's account of the result of the Fall. That is on page 56, line 15 from bottom. I counted . . .

Mr. Reinken:

But, however insignificant the damage done, it sufficed to open man's eyes.^{xiv} He discovered in himself a power of choosing for himself a way of life, of not being bound without alternative to a single way, like the animals.^{xv}

LS: Formerly he was bound,⁶⁸ prevented by his instinct from eating of that particular tree. Now he can eat of any tree and therefore he has a great latitude, but at the same time also the embarrassment of choice, and therefore he must use his reason. Yes?

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} In original: "(3:7)"

^{xv} Ibid., 56.

Mr. Reinken:

Perhaps the discovery of this advantage created a moment of delight. But of necessity, anxiety and alarm as to how he was to deal with this newly discovered power quickly followed; for man was a being who did not yet know either the secret properties or the remote effects of anything. He stood, as it were, at the brink of an abyss.^{xvi}

LS:⁶⁹ That is freedom. If you are free, then you stand at the brink of an abyss. This has now become a very common subject,⁷⁰ and the connection with Kant is by no means accidental. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Until that moment instinct had directed him toward specific objects of desire. But from these there now opened up an infinity of such objects, and he did not yet know how to choose between them. On the other hand, it was impossible for him to return to the state of servitude (i.e., subjection to instinct) from the state of freedom, once he had tasted the latter.^{xvii}

LS: This⁷¹ refers to the biblical account of the expulsion from Paradise.⁷² You know, the meaning is obviously completely changed. Now this⁷³ would be an interesting story, the account of the interpretations of the fall in the seventeenth and eighteenth century—I mean, by people who were not orthodox but for one reason or other felt [it] necessary to present their view in the guise of biblical exegesis. One beautiful and well-known example is of course that of Milton in *Paradise Lost*, when you look at the end of the poem and you see it wasn't so bad after all. You know?⁷⁴ You remember the verses? There was the word before them, I forgot the sequel. At any rate—

Student: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: I believe it was something . . .

LS: Ya, at any rate it was not very terrible. Yes. Good. Now on page 58 in your translation, the first paragraph. After the quotation, after the reference to verses 13 to 19.

Mr. Reinken:

Man, compelled to support himself, his wife and his future children, foresaw the ever-increasing hardships of labor. Woman foresaw the troubles to which nature had subjected her sex, and those additional ones to which man, a being stronger than she, would subject her. Both foresaw with fear—in the background of the picture and at the end of a troublesome life—that which, to be sure, inexorably strikes all animals without, however, causing them care, namely, death. And they

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Ibid.

apparently foreswore and decried as a crime the use of reason, which had been the cause of all these ills.^{xviii}

LS: Now this is Kant's very indirect reference to the prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁷⁵ A criticism of reason was made by very inexperienced human beings on the basis of their very limited knowledge. It amounts to that, doesn't it? Page 58 in the same paragraph, after the reference to verse 21.

Mr. Reinken:

And from then on he looked upon them [the other beasts—R] no longer as fellow creatures, but as mere means and tools to whatever ends he pleased. This idea entails (obscurely, to be sure) the idea of contrast, that what he may say to an animal he may not say to a fellow human; that he must rather consider the latter as an equal participant in the gifts of nature. This idea was the first preparation of all those restraints in his relations with his fellow men which reason would in due course impose on man's—^{xix}

LS: No, no, "in the future." In the future.

Mr. Reinken: Would in the future "impose on man's will, restraints which are far more essential for the establishment of a civil society than inclination and love."^{xx}

LS: Yes. That is also very characteristically anti-biblical. Now you see, of course, Kant's complete disregard of the image of God notion of the Bible. And he has a kind of justification because he doesn't deal with chapter 1,⁷⁶ in which this was set forth most clearly.

And it is clear when he says here, "reason will impose it in the *future*," the moral law was not known in the beginning of mankind and could not be known. This theme of seventeenth, eighteenth century revolutionary thinkers—I mean, men like Rousseau, Locke included. According to the traditional natural law view, the natural law is valid only of course if it is properly promulgated to man. And the traditional view was it *is* properly promulgated to man by the very fact that man is a rational being. And this is questioned by people like Locke, by Locke in particularly clear form in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, where, on the basis of accounts by travelers, he tries to show—or for that matter, not only travelers, but also accounts of what armies do when sacking a town—and says: Where do you find here any effectiveness of the conscience? Of the ingrained, inborn knowledge of good?^{77xxi}

Isn't this another inducement for a philosophy of history? I mean, how can we reasonably explain that the natural law, as Kant calls it "the law of reason," could not be known properly until now? Now [it] may be 1688 when Locke wrote, it may be 1782 when Kant

^{xviii} Ibid., 58.

^{xix} Ibid., 58-59.

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} *Essay*, chapter 3.

wrote, and so on. This is one not unimportant function of the doctrine of a philosophy of history. It leads to another question⁷⁸ referring to Kant's formulation in particular. Can early men, primitive, ever have become worthy of happiness since they could not be moral in any serious sense, and hence could they ever be expected to partake of life after death? That is a necessary question.

Now let us turn to page 59, the second paragraph. "And so man."

Mr. Reinken:

had entered into a relation of equality with all rational beings, whatever their rank,^{xxii} with respect to the claim of being an end in himself, respected as such by everyone, a being which no one might treat as a mere means to ulterior ends. So far as natural gifts are concerned, other beings may surpass man beyond all comparison. Nevertheless, man is without qualification equal even to higher beings in that none has the right to use him according to pleasure.^{xxiii}

LS: Yes, so let us stop here. Now this is Kant's interpretation of the verse of chapter 3, verse 22 which reads: "And the Lord God said, 'Behold the man'⁷⁹ is one of us, to know good and evil.'" That is Kant's interpretation of that. Man had⁸⁰ reached equality with all rational beings. What was a consequence—his sin, according to the Bible—is according to Kant the consequence of his inevitable and rational liberation from the tutelage of nature. Man is equal with God, with all rational beings regarding the claim to be an end in himself, to be recognized as such an end by God and any other rational beings.

Remember the⁸¹ formulation of the categorical imperative in *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*: Act so that you use humanity, both in your person, and in the person of every other man, always also as an end and never merely as means. This is presented there, of course, as a duty: Act in this way. But this we learn from our present passage: in doing so, the categorical imperative gives man a lawful claim, that's to say a right. And that becomes then a moot question: What is more important or the key to the whole position, the duty aspect or the right aspect of Kant's moral philosophy? At first glance, everybody will say rightly that Kant is the philosopher of duty. But the same Kant in one of his writings raises for the first time this question: How come that moral philosophy is called the doctrine of duties (think of Cicero and the *Offices*, and so on) and not the doctrine of rights? So for Kant this is already a question. Why should [there] not be at least an equal emphasis on the rights? That is, I think, very revealing.

Now this change of emphasis from duties to rights is I think one of the most important facts in the history of morality. You hear again of the new morality rebelling against the old. This is a process which has repeated itself almost in every generation. If the big revolution was in the seventeenth century,⁸² or maybe Machiavelli, where this happened for the first time, such a rebellion of a new morality against the old morality, and one of the most characteristic features is exactly the shift of emphasis from duty to right. It is very easy to say and in a sense it is perfectly correct, that there are no duties without

^{xxii} In original: "(3:22)"

^{xxiii} Ibid., 59.

rights and no rights without duties. The latter is less clear. One can speak of the rights of God without⁸³ admitting duties of God, for example.

But at any rate, this change is crucial. One of the many illustrations is one which I believe I never mentioned in my publications: in Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*, that is to say, the moral work of [Descartes]^{xxiv}, if we disregard his *Letters to Queen*⁸⁴[Christina] of Sweden, there he presents also in the context of the virtue of generosity, there he presents his moral principle, and⁸⁵ the only term of this kind which occurs there is the word "right." I do not believe that there is a single mention of duties in this work of Descartes. This only in passing.

Let us turn to⁸⁶ the end of this whole section, after his reference to verse 23. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

In the future, the wretchedness of his condition would often arouse in him the wish for a paradise, the creation of his imagination—^{xxv}

LS: That is Kant's⁸⁷ last word on the—among other things, the biblical account of the original sin of man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

[that creation] where he could dream or while away his existence in quiet inactivity and permanent peace. But between him and that imagined place of bliss, restless reason would interpose itself, irresistibly impelling him to develop the faculties implanted within him. It would not permit him to return to that crude and simple state from which it had taken^{xxvi} him to begin with.^{xxvii} It would make him take up patiently the toil which he yet hates, and pursue the frippery which he despises. It would make him forget even death itself which he dreads, because of all those trifles which he is even more afraid to lose.^{xxviii}

LS: Yes. So in other words, this reason of man as ordinarily practical is a very silly thing.⁸⁸ It is a misused reason, but it is nevertheless reason.⁸⁹ The original condition would have been one of instinct. There was no Paradise at the beginning, but only crudeness. Reason, despite its irrationality, is a net gain. Why? Because⁹⁰ this irrational use of reason leads ultimately to an ever greater approximation to the perfectly rational or just society. We know this . . . already before. Yes. Ya, let us see on page 60, the second paragraph. "This—"

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxiv} Strauss says "Kant," in error.

^{xxv} Ibid.

^{xxvi} In original: "driven"

^{xxvii} In original: "(3:24)"

^{xxviii} Ibid.

However, while for the species the direction of this road may be from worse to better, this is not true for the individual. Before reason awoke, there was as yet neither commandment nor prohibition and hence also no violation of either.^{xxix}

LS:⁹¹ Kant couldn't have stated more clearly that in human history there was a premoral stage, and therefore a stage of humans who could never have become worthy of happiness. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

But when reason began to set about its business, it came, in all its pristine weakness, into conflict with animality, with all its power. Inevitably evils sprang up, and (which is worse) along with the cultivation of reason also vices, such as had been wholly alien to the state of ignorance and innocence.^{xxx}

LS: Ya, now let us stop here. The emergence of the evils was necessary⁹², i.e. there was no freedom in . . . with that. What is the progress of the species, Kant says here, is not a progress for the individuals. For the individuals,⁹³ they were more miserable after they had become⁹⁴ actually rational beings than when they were in a kind of beastly state.

Now this reminds me of a statement of Rousseau in his letter to Beaumont, the then Archbishop of Paris, which he wrote after his *Emile* and *Social Contract* had been condemned by the Archbishop. It had also been condemned by the authorities in Geneva. And there he says:

The development of enlightenment and vice always takes place in the same proportion. That is to say, the more enlightened or rational men become, the more vicious they become. Not in the individuals, but in the peoples. This is a distinction which I have always carefully made, and which none of those who have attacked me has ever been able to understand.^{xxxi}

That is a very forceful statement, disregarded by all interpreters of Rousseau whom I know. Now what does Rousseau mean by it?

The progress toward reason—I formulate it now in Kantian terms, not speaking of individuals and the peoples, by which Rousseau means outstanding individuals and peoples in the mass, but the Kantian distinction between the individuals and the species—progress toward reason and the progress of reason is bad for the species but good for some individuals. Kant, however, says that progress is good for the species but bad for the individuals, for it brings great sufferings which however redound to the benefit of the species. You must recognize in this thought famous features of Marxism. All this misery, including the abominations of capitalism, are better than the South Sea islanders and their happiness which would lead nowhere.

^{xxix} Ibid., 60.

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxi} Apparently Strauss's translation. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 9 (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2001), 52.

Both Rousseau and Kant presuppose that nature is good but takes care only of the species, not of the individuals. Or, if you want to speak of providence, there is only general providence, not particular providence. Yet according to Rousseau the development of civilization is against nature. According to Kant that development is in accordance with the intention of nature. Because this is the case, because according to Rousseau the development of civilization is against nature, there is⁹⁵ no philosophy of history strictly speaking in Rousseau, meaning there is no meaningful history because it⁹⁶ doesn't make sense. But there is such a philosophy of history in Kant because this development of civilization corresponds to the intention of nature. This statement needs some qualifications, but it may be sufficient at this time. We see also here again that Kant asserts the necessity of vice for human progress, which is⁹⁷ an important modification of Mandeville's point: private vice, public benefit. And of course one must think of Hegel and Marx.

Aristotle is here the beautiful counterpart to these modern thinkers. According to Aristotle the development of the city and everything possible owing to the city is a natural process, which means a process without the necessary interference or intervention of vice or crime. Aristotle was not a babe of the woods, so he knew as well as Hobbes and other people that the foundations of kingdoms are frequently led in crime, but Aristotle says that there is no essential necessity for that. For the modern thinker there is an essential necessity for that. That is a great difference.

So can you go on where you left off, Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken:

Morally, the first step from this latter state" of innocence "was therefore a fall; physically—^{xxxii}

LS: A fall? A fall.

Mr. Reinken: "A fall." Yes.

LS:⁹⁸ He doesn't speak of "the" Fall, but at least of a fall. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: (Good of him to give something to the tradition.)

physically, it was a punishment, for a whole host of formerly unknown ills were a consequence of this fall. The history of nature therefore begins with good, for it is the work of God, while the history of freedom begins with wickedness, for it is the work of man. For the individual, who in the use of his freedom is concerned only with himself, this whole change was a loss; for nature, whose purpose with man concerns the species, it was a gain. Hence the individual must consider as his own fault, not only every act of wickedness which he commits, but also all the evils which he suffers; and yet at the same time, insofar as he is a member of the whole (a

^{xxxii} Ibid.

species), he must admire and praise the wisdom and purposiveness of the whole arrangement.^{xxxiii}

LS: Isn't this beautiful? You remember also Marx's phrase of man as a *Gattungswesen*. What is usually the English translation of that? A "species-being" would be literal. In other words, the fundamental collectivism, is implied . . .

Here the morally bad is integrated. That is the function of a philosophy of history. The morally bad is integrated into the intention of nature, and then it looks quite different, doesn't it? So the philosophy of history is in a way transmoral, although it has a moral foundation, as we shall see from the other writings. Hence, if the moral point of view is the highest, as it is according to Kant's strict teaching, then the status of the philosophy of history is problematic. And that is one reason why it is relegated to outside the gate, as I call it, and you know it does not enter completely the sanctuary of Kant's teaching.

Now the sequel is very interesting but too long to read. Here Kant discusses Rousseau explicitly, namely, the well-known contradiction in his writing. That Rousseau, especially in the first writing, the⁹⁹ *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* and to some extent also in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, had been a severe critic of civilization and culture; and then he had written nevertheless the *Emile* and the *Social Contract*, which seem to present a solution to the problem of culture and civilization, namely, the perfect social order, contrary to the enthusiasm for the originally solitary man which he showed in these other writings.

And Kant reconciles these writings, and the Kantian reconciliation¹⁰⁰ has become the classic interpretation of Rousseau up to the present day, by which I do not mean to say that there may not have been men before Kant who suggested [it]. I simply do not know. I mean, Kant had of course a very great influence especially on the Germans. But¹⁰¹ nevertheless, this interpretation is not tenable. I will give you one proof of it¹⁰²—there are many more, but this is the most simple. According to the teaching of the *Social Contract*, the solution described there is wholly satisfactory because in a good society, a just society, man has both the advantages of the state of nature, namely, freedom, maximum freedom, and at the same time security, which he did not have in the state of nature. In the phrase of Rousseau, "man remains as free as he was heretofore." And therefore, what else do you want? But¹⁰³ that is not sufficient. And I will read to you only one passage from the beginning of the first chapter of the *Social Contract*: "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains."¹⁰⁴ Someone regards himself as a master of others while he doesn't cease to be a greater slave than they. How did this change take place? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? I believe I can answer this question."

So the theme of the *Social Contract* is to show¹⁰⁵ what can render legitimate the transition from freedom to chains. Social life, however perfect, is still a life of chains according to Rousseau, and therefore there is an ultimate cleavage in Rousseau's thought, which one can show in all his writings, between society, however good, and the individual. Yes. Rousseau himself, and that is the one reason why he wrote his

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

autobiographic writings, presents himself as such a *natural* man, the only natural man, so to speak, because he lives at the margin of society and therefore has a kind of freedom which the citizen does not possess.

Now there is a very long note here on page 61.¹⁰⁶ Kant deals here with the antagonism between¹⁰⁷ mankind's aspirations to its *moral* destiny and the unchangeable. How does he translate that? The beginning.¹⁰⁸

Mr. Reinken:

I will mention the following, by way of giving a few examples of this conflict between man's striving toward the fulfillment of his moral destiny, on the one hand, and, on the other, his unalterable subjection to laws fit for the uncivilized and animal state.^{xxxiv}

LS: So in other words, Kant is not an extreme utopist, meaning man can never get rid of that original heritage of bestiality which he has from his, as I would say today, from his beast—how do they say?¹⁰⁹ Not beast—

Mr. Reinken: The old Adam?¹¹⁰

LS: No, no, I mean in the ways of evolutionists. Of his—

Mr. Reinken: Beastliness.

LS: Of his beastliness, ya, all right. Now¹¹¹ here in the first paragraph, in the first example which he . . . with, in that connection he mentions [that] only the perfect civil constitution can resolve the fundamental antagonism between man's nature and civilization. Do we have that?

Mr. Reinken: Yeah. "This conflict only a perfect civil constitution could end—"^{xxxv}

LS: Ya. Yes. Now that again is one of the points preserved in Marx, ya?¹¹² Marx of course wouldn't speak of the perfect civil constitution because he believes in a withering away of the state, but if we use a broader term, "the perfect society" will resolve the fundamental contradiction between man's nature and civilization. Man's nature, not alienated, not split up into departments, i.e., whole, entire; and civilization means alienation, means specialization or departmentalization, and that will be overcome in the final stage. Yes. Now in the next paragraph in this note, he says—

Mr. Reinken: "This, then, is one example to prove—"^{xxxvi}

LS: Ya, but we cannot read [that]. He speaks of another contradiction, however,¹¹³ between men's nature and civilization which cannot be resolved—

^{xxxiv} Ibid., 61.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

^{xxxvi} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken: Just for the luckiest of thinkers.

LS: Because it is rooted in the fact that man ages and dies. Here Marx hasn't discovered a recipe, how one can overcome death. Perhaps [you] can have longer life spans and¹¹⁴ get all kinds of means to keep yourself younger for a longer time, but fundamentally this problem is insoluble by human means. And the third example which Kant gives is again a contradiction which can't be resolved, and that has to do with inequality. We might read that.

Mr. Reinken:

Human inequality may serve as our third example, not inequality as regards natural talent or worldly good fortune, but with regard to universal human rights. There is much truth in Rousseau's complaint about this inequality. At the same time, it is inseparable from culture, so long as the latter progresses without plan, as it were;—^{xxxvii}

LS: "As it were." In other words, a planned progress of culture now that could dispose of this difficulty. Yes. No, Kant did not think of such abominations, but still he prepared parts of that doctrine. Yes, yes. I think that we can leave it at that.

At the beginning of the next paragraph. The translation¹¹⁵ of the title is wrong. How did they translate that?

Mr. Reinken: It says "The End of History," and it says the—

LS: No.

Mr. Reinken: The *schluss*—the conclusion?

LS: No, no. It's "the conclusion of the story," I would translate it, meaning of the biblical story.

Mr. Reinken: Oh, oh! Yeah.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: "End of the story."

LS: I would say "conclusion of the story," ya, because it is not the conclusion of that story which Kant is interpreting for our benefit. Read the beginning of this section, please.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxxvii} Ibid., 61.

The following period began with man's passage from an age of comfort and peace to one of labor and strife. This latter was the prelude of unification through society.^{xxxviii}

LS: Ya. Now, labor and strife: that is the characteristic of history. Again, a thought not unfamiliar from Hegel and Marx. Now then he discusses the first great case of discord, [which] is of course that between Cain and Abel, and it is amusing to see how Kant interprets that story. That is¹¹⁶ 11 from bottom on the same page.

Mr. Reinken:

Because of their difference in condition, the farmer could seem to envy the herdsman, and regard him as more favored by heaven.^{xxxix} In fact, however, he rather considered him a nuisance, so long as he remained in his neighborhood. For grazing cattle do not spare the crops.^{xi}

LS: Do you see?

Mr. Reinken:

Now the herdsman, having done his damage, could always take his cattle and go elsewhere, escaping all responsibility. This is easy for him, for he leaves nothing behind which he would not find elsewhere. Hence it was probably the farmer who first resorted to force in order to end the nuisance which the other had created. The latter probably was conscious of no wrongdoing. And it was probably the farmer who finally removed himself as far as possible from those who live the life of the herdsman. For in no other way would the encroachments, or at least the danger—^{xli}

LS: Ya, that is very amusing. In other words, the wicked fellow was Abel, not Cain, because agriculture is much more progressive than pastoral life. That's it, yes. It is amazing, if you think that this is¹¹⁷ the philosopher most famous for his severe morality, and yet [he] can develop this philosophy of history which has such shocking implications.¹¹⁸ Of course¹¹⁹ Kant is properly silent on Cain's slaying of Abel. This would be unbearable for him. Yes.

I think we will leave it at this. There is not very much, only [we] might want to finish that. If you look at page 65 in your edition, there is a parenthesis. Ya?

Mr. Reinken:

(Even now, the danger of war is the only factor which mitigates despotism. For a state cannot be powerful unless it is wealthy, but without liberty, wealth-producing activities cannot flourish. This is why a poor nation requires the

^{xxxviii} Ibid., 63.

^{xxxix} In original: "(4:4)"

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xli} Ibid., 63-64.

broad support of a citizenry intensely committed to its survival, to take the place of its lack of wealth. But such support, again, is possible only in a free nation.)^{xlii}

LS: Ya, that is interesting.¹²⁰ Kant makes here a distinction between despotism and a free society. The free society requires public spiritedness, or to use the more common expression, virtue. That was Montesquieu's famous teaching. The principle of republics and especially of democracies is virtue. In a despotic state, there is no need or place for public spirit, for virtue¹²¹ as Montesquieu had said, but there is need for wealth. This is Kant's modification of Montesquieu's teaching. And since you cannot have wealth without freedom of acquisition, there must be some freedom which a republic doesn't need; think of the Swiss or other mountainous people who are free as farmer and herdsman without any trade to speak of in former times. Yes.

And the thought which Kant does not develop here but elsewhere, as we will see, is this: now the despots are compelled to grant freedom of acquisition, of trade and industry. And this freedom of trade¹²² will counteract in the long run (especially foreign trade) positive religion—foreign trade allegedly creating peaceful relations among men¹²³ (there are never any trade wars, of course), whereas positive religion separates the nations. And positive religion, which is the support of despotism, is therefore weakened by the freedom of trade which despotism must grant. That is a beautiful dialectical construction in the Hegelian sense. But of course¹²⁴ we have seen in the meantime that the general thesis that despotism must allow for freedom of trade, at least,¹²⁵ is by no means true. I mean, both the German and the Russian experience show that what is true of the enlightened despotism of the eighteenth century is not true of despotism as such.

There are two more passages which are of some interest. On page 62, the second paragraph, where Kant speaks [of] (again this passage had been considered by Mr. . . .) the inseparable connection between war and freedom, at least for the foreseeable future. Because in the present stage only war, the danger of war, can make people alive, alert, and prevent the relapse into a state of South Sea islanders, which for Kant is something very terrible. But since perpetual peace is the ideal, but an ideal can never be achieved within finite time, perpetual peace means perpetual war. It may be a bit less, ya? It may be a bit less. For example, you may have prohibition against killing of non-fighting personnel and other qualifications, or proper care for the wounded and prisoners, but still there will always be war. And that is implied in this infinite progress.

One more point on page 68 in the second paragraph, where he says—

Mr. Reinken:

An exposition of his history such as the above, then, is useful for man, and conducive to his instruction and improvement. It teaches him that he must not blame the evils which oppress him on Providence, nor attribute his own offense to an original sin committed by his first parents.^{xliii}

^{xlii} Ibid., 65.

^{xliii} Ibid., 68.

LS: Ya, now this is the other point which I wanted to raise: the denial of original sin, which of course goes together with the radically unorthodox character of Kant's interpretation of these chapters of Genesis.

So now let me have another look at what we are supposed to do next time. Next time *Theory and Practice*.

¹ Deleted "the...."

² Deleted "But...."

³ Deleted "some reasons...."

⁴ Deleted "we have to...this...Kant...."

⁵ Deleted "there is a much...."

⁶ Deleted "but does he not...."

⁷ Deleted "Herder...."

⁸ Deleted "Kant...."

⁹ Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** Thucydides."

¹⁰ Deleted "are...."

¹¹ Deleted "in finding...."

¹² Deleted "because....boons."

¹³ Deleted "which...."

¹⁴ Deleted "Kant...."

¹⁵ Deleted "is...he probably would not...he."

¹⁶ Deleted "Will you pass this on to Miss [student's name]? Good.."

¹⁷ Deleted "let as turn...this is getting [inaudible word] and [inaudible word]...."

¹⁸ Deleted "to consider...."

¹⁹ Deleted "So...."

²⁰ Deleted "we will not...."

²¹ Deleted "Now the formulation which occurs in Kant...."

²² Deleted "Let us...."

²³ Deleted "has."

²⁴ Deleted "the...."

²⁵ Deleted "And when Hegel says...."

²⁶ Deleted "One cannot...."

²⁷ Deleted "I...."

²⁸ Deleted "a fundamental...."

²⁹ Deleted "moral...."

³⁰ Deleted "the subjective conditions...instead of."

³¹ Deleted "the conditions of happiness derive their validity from...."

³² Deleted "everything...."

³³ Deleted "there...in this change...."

³⁴ Deleted "if men...."

³⁵ Deleted "postulates of God."

³⁶ Deleted "But...therefore...this is...."

³⁷ Deleted "if...."

³⁸ Deleted "of...of man...."

³⁹ Deleted "of the...."

⁴⁰ Deleted "as...as...."

⁴¹ Deleted "Not...."

⁴² Deleted "as...."

⁴³ Deleted "Herder."

⁴⁴ Deleted "in...."

⁴⁵ Deleted "to...Kant had referred."

⁴⁶ Deleted "and this...."

⁴⁷ Deleted "the reason is that...."

-
- 48 Deleted "was...."
- 49 Deleted "cranes."
- 50 Deleted "how...whether...whether these crane...men of the pre-human or dawn-human...."
- 51 Deleted "crane."
- 52 Deleted "this...."
- 53 Deleted "or...."
- 54 Deleted "one...."
- 55 Deleted "Only under that...."
- 56 Deleted "In...and that is...."
- 57 Deleted "To...but."
- 58 Deleted "blather...."
- 59 Deleted "last time...."
- 60 Deleted "in the sequel, in the same paragraph."
- 61 Deleted "the first...no I meant a little before."
- 62 Deleted "He...."
- 63 Deleted "It is...."
- 64 Deleted "we find...."
- 65 Deleted "in the next...."
- 66 Deleted "he...."
- 67 Deleted "it...."
- 68 Deleted "against...."
- 69 Deleted "That means...."
- 70 Deleted "but...."
- 71 Deleted "is...."
- 72 Deleted "Meaning...."
- 73 Deleted "is...."
- 74 Deleted "They had the...."
- 75 Deleted "This was an...as it were...this...."
- 76 Deleted "and...."
- 77 Deleted "Now this is...Kant simply takes it over and that creates some...."
- 78 Deleted "in...."
- 79 Deleted "has become...."
- 80 Deleted "become...."
- 81 Deleted "categoric...."
- 82 Deleted "where this...."
- 83 Deleted "speaking of the...."
- 84 Deleted "*Elizabeth of Sweden*...."
- 85 Deleted "the only...."
- 86 Deleted "the same...."
- 87 Deleted "word...."
- 88 Deleted "But."
- 89 Deleted "There is...."
- 90 Deleted "the irrationality leads ultimately...."
- 91 Deleted "In a...."
- 92 Deleted "They were...."
- 93 Deleted "is what...."
- 94 Deleted "rational...."
- 95 Deleted "not...."
- 96 Deleted "is...."
- 97 Deleted "a modification...."
- 98 Deleted "I mean, that is...he does...yeah.."
- 99 Deleted "first...."
- 100 Deleted "is...."
- 101 Deleted "I...."
- 102 Deleted "That...."

¹⁰³ Deleted “this is not correct...I mean.”

¹⁰⁴ Deleted “A man....”

¹⁰⁵ Deleted “the....”

¹⁰⁶ Deleted “in which...the first paragraph...the...the....”

¹⁰⁷ Deleted “man’s....”

¹⁰⁸ Deleted “**Reinken**: ‘The one for—’...‘this then—’? **LS**: The...the first paragraph.”

¹⁰⁹ Deleted “From his....”

¹¹⁰ Deleted “**LS**: Pardon? **Reinken**: The old Adam?”

¹¹¹ Deleted “and....”

¹¹² Deleted “The....”

¹¹³ Deleted “which....”

¹¹⁴ Deleted “have all kinds of....”

¹¹⁵ Deleted “of that....”

¹¹⁶ Deleted “on page.”

¹¹⁷ Deleted “a man....”

¹¹⁸ Deleted “He.”

¹¹⁹ Deleted “he is....”

¹²⁰ Deleted “I do not know....”

¹²¹ Deleted “as Rousseau had....”

¹²² Deleted “especially”

¹²³ Deleted “there are no....”

¹²⁴ Deleted “the objections are....”

¹²⁵ Deleted “and....”

Session 12: May 11, 1967

Leo Strauss: That was a good paper, Mr. Hunter.ⁱ Now¹ a few points, which I will take up now. Regarding the artilleryman, were you not a bit unfair to Kant?

Mr. Hunter: Yes. [Students chuckle]

LS: Why?

Mr. Hunter: Well, because his point was² that the artilleryman was derogating theory because he simply didn't understand the whole theory. Had he only understood the whole theory, that he wouldn't have—

LS: In other words, he—

Mr. Hunter: been so disparaging.

LS: He depended on the engineers who made the cannon.

Mr. Hunter: Yes. But in other words, the practical art of the artilleryman is dependent upon the theoretical.

LS: Ya, and he is only a fool if he is unaware of the fact—

Mr. Hunter: Right, but no one would ridicule him. Kant is being a bit unfair to the artilleryman because no one would ridicule him.

LS: But still, he deserves ridicule if he goes beyond his province, doesn't he? If he would simply say: I am a simple artilleryman and I do what my superior officers tell me; I would be wholly unable to make a cannon, perhaps even to repair it. The modest man—no one could blame him. But not if he³ oversteps himself. Now regarding women, Kant's shocking assertion. What is so shocking about it? [Laughter]

Mr. Hunter: No, it's not shocking, no.

LS: I mean in the case of Kant.

Mr. Hunter: In the case of Kant?

LS: Ya.

Mr. Hunter: Because I see nothing in the principle of autonomy which excludes all women just like that.

ⁱ The reading of Mr. Hunter's paper was not recorded.

LS: What is so shocking in Kant, I believe, is the fact [that] if Aristotle would say these things, that's perfectly fine—

Mr. Hunter: Yes.

LS:⁴ Or Plato. But Kant speaks *a priori* strictly—

Mr. Hunter: Yes.

LS: And so human beings are considered as rational beings alone, and the difference of sex doesn't enter. One can say: Well, children should be excluded because they are not sufficiently—

Mr. Hunter: But even children, even nine year old children can judge—

LS: Yes. Yes [LS laughs], I know that. I know that. So there is a minor difficulty for Kant which is quite right. Now⁵ when did Amesⁱⁱ publish his book?

Mr. Hunter: Precisely the same time as Kant was writing this essay. I took that from the essay that it was the same.

LS: I see. But there is no possibility that Kant could have read it.

Mr. Hunter: No.

LS: No. Good. Now, you did not mention the fact that in the very title of this particular part of Kant's writing it is set "against Hobbes."

Mr. Hunter: Yes.⁶

LS: Ya, to what extent is Kant against Hobbes?

Mr. Hunter:⁷ I think both Hobbes and Kant would agree that state of nature, whatever it is, is poor, nasty, brutish, and short—

LS: Ya.

Mr. Hunter: You need to get out immediately. But I think that⁸ where Kant finds his own crucial difference is in that he provides a standard for the legislator, for the head of state to judge his laws—

LS: Whereas Hobbes—

Mr. Hunter: Whereas Hobbes does not.

ⁱⁱ We have been unable to identify this source.

LS: Ya, that is true. But what has this to do with the question of theory and practice? Because the whole piece, if you read it, is much more Hobbean—

Mr. Hunter: Yes.

LS: than anti-Hobbean. But it is true, this difference remains.⁹ But what has this to do with the issue of theory and practice?

Mr. Hunter: Well, only through a conjunction of theory and practice is it possible to determine justice in the—

LS:¹⁰ Hobbes does the same thing. After all, he was not a man of affairs; he was a private man, and as such wrote his *Leviathan*. He was not even a professor. All right,¹¹ we will take this up. But [that is] the question which we are compelled to raise.

Now we must understand the purpose of Kant's writing; otherwise we misunderstand things completely. Now first of all, this writing appeared in 1793. What we read last time was written¹² prior. Then came the *Critique of Judgment* in 1788, *Religion Within the Limits of Mere Reason*, 1793. And then *Theory and Practice*.¹³ Of the great works, only the *Metaphysics of Morals*, which was published in 1797, is later.¹⁴

How does this translation state¹⁵ the *Gemeinspruch*? The common saying. Where does this come from? I don't know, I mean, whether there is any classic statement to this effect, because the question is not the distinction between theory and practice. That is of course old, and especially in Aristotle. But here we have a particular assertion that this might be true in theory, meaning in practical or moral theory, i.e., not in ballistics and so on. Well, Burke speaks of the old quarrel between speculation and practice and has said a lot about this subject, but whether Kant knew these writings of Burke—but the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* I'm sure he had read.¹⁶ But I do not know when¹⁷ the German translation came out. The *Reflections* were published in 1791, and some translations appeared very soon in Germany. I am sorry, I forgot the dates.¹⁸ Because Burke would naturally be an antipode to Kant.

The distinction occurs quite frequently in Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, where he attacks the Jesuit orders for making the distinction between theory and practice all the time.¹⁹ Let me see an example, just to illustrate it a bit. The question is interesting:

Is it permitted to kill one who²⁰ has boxed one's ears? Lessius says this is permitted in speculation [laughter], but one should not advise it in practice, because of the danger of hatred and the murders harmful to the state which might arise from it. But others have judged that if one avoids these inconveniences, namely,²¹ other murders, it is permitted *ET SEUR* in practice.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ Blaise Pascal, Thirteenth Letter, *Les lettres provinciales de Blaise Pascal*, ed. H.F. Stewart (Manchester: University Press, 1920), 153, ll. 16-23.

Now²² Pascal makes a lot of these points and tries to show, fundamentally along the lines of Kant, that if something is permitted in theory then it will also be safe in practice. But here²³ a distinction²⁴ occurs and is made considerable use of. It's only a point.

I would be glad if I knew what the immediate occasion was why Kant wrote these essays. It doesn't appear from these essays, and Mr. Reinken was unable to get for us the Kant edition where there might have been a note by the editor. Now, but²⁵ this is not terribly important.

Now what is the issue? Now Kant states it right at the beginning. The question is not²⁶ the relation between theoretical and practical science. It is rather an intrapractical distinction: whether the theoretical basis of practice can be rejected in favor of a simple empiricism. I mean empiricism in the older sense of the word: men who have grown old in active life without ever having studied whether they are not better judges of practical matters than professors or other theoretical men.

Kant makes there first the point that theory is not sufficient for practice because there is need for judgment, namely, for subsumption. For example,²⁷ some action has been done. It must be subsumed. Is it murder? Is it justifiable homicide?²⁸ The general rules will not help you. And even if you have some rules of subsumption, then you will soon come to other questions of subsumptions, and that cannot go on infinitely. And without the power of subsumption, which is a power of judgment, a natural gift, theory is surely not sufficient, as Kant grants. And besides, Kant also grants²⁹ that a theory may in itself not be sufficient as theory; and then of course it is not the question of theory but a question of insufficient or bad theory. This causes no question.

By theory Kant understands, as appears on page 413, the third paragraph: "certain principles, which constitute a whole." That is what he understands by theory in a very general way. There are men of affairs, business, who out of ignorance despise theory. That's a well-known thing, although I believe today less than in former times because the prestige of social scientists has so greatly increased in the last twenty, thirty years. But these men of affairs are more bearable than sophisticates³⁰ who despise theory. Such people also exist.

Now on page 414, line 3 following, he gives some examples where this common saying might make sense.

Mr. Reinken:

in other words, some more theory were added, these theories would coincide with experience."^{iv}

LS: That is the case of the artilleryman. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

^{iv} Kant, *Theory and Practice*, 414.

Still, it might appear,^v that a theory which is concerned with objects of observation is quite different from a theory in which these objects are only present through concepts, as in the case with objects of mathematics and philosophy. The objects of mathematics and philosophy may be *thought of* quite well and without objection by reason but perhaps they can never be *given* but ^{vi}only empty ideas. In practice, such ideas could be used either not at all or with disadvantage. If this were true, the common saying would yet be right in such cases. But—^{vii}

LS: Kant doesn't give any examples, but he says in this sphere it might be possible. But that is of no interest. Yes, go on.

Mr. Reinken:

in a theory which is founded on the *concept of duty*, the concern over the empty ideality of that concept is eliminated, for it would not be a duty to pursue a certain effect of our will if this effect were not possible in experience, even if experience is imagined as complete or approaching completion. In the present discussion we are only dealing with this kind of theory.^{viii}

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So here the problem doesn't arise because the feasibility or possibility follows from the fact that the action is commanded by the moral law: "Thou canst because thou oughtst." And therefore you don't have to engage in a study of human nature, bestiology, or psychology or what have you, in order to make sure that it is feasible. Yes. Now let us turn to the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

This maxim about theory and practice which has become common in our wordy and deedless times causes very great damage if it is applied to moral questions, i.e., moral or legal duty. For the canon of practical reason is involved in this realm. Here the value of^{ix} practice depends upon its appropriateness to the theory upon which it is based. All is lost if empirical, and consequently accidental, conditions of the execution of the law are made the conditions of the law itself. Then a practice which is calculated in relation to the probable result of previous experience is accorded the right of determining the theory itself.^x

LS: "Previous" is underlined in at least in my edition of the original, and surely must be read as if underlined. Experience to which the practitioners refer is always experience hitherto, and therefore, they are (if we can use present-day language)—these businessmen, at least of former times, were always adherents of the status quo, because³¹ through experience we know only of what has happened hitherto.

^v In original: "[it might be urged]." Brackets in original.

^{vi} In original: "will remain."

^{vii} Ibid. Brackets in original.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} In original: "[a given]." Brackets in original.

^x Ibid.

The moral and political possibilities of mankind cannot be determined by previous practice. That is the crucial point: the opening of the moral-political horizon by liberating moral and political philosophy from dependence on experience, which always means experience of what man has been able to do hitherto.

Now in the next paragraph, which is not in the translation, Kant makes it clear that the issue is between the man of business, of affairs, the man of the world, versus the man of the school, the professor. And the former are in the habit of looking down on the latter. But this, as I said, has greatly changed. At least the right kind of [professor]³² is now in high demand on the parts of the businessmen.

Friedrich translated only the central part of this tripartite essay, which is perfectly defensible. He had to make some selections because he had set out to make selections. The third part—it's a pity that they did not translate it in this little book on history, because it is one of the important utterances of Kant regarding history. But we have to make the best of what we have.

Now let us turn then to the question of theory to practice in your public law . . . But the key point here is that Kant understands by public law not what is now ordinarily understood by public law, namely positive law, but natural or rational public law: *Ius publicum universalis* as it was called in the seventeenth, eighteenth century. Not the public law of this or that country, at this or that time, but what is eternally the public law.

This kind of public law emerged in the seventeenth century, and these great³³ and famous works of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau (to mention only them), are works devoted to such natural public law. That is a great change compared to the traditional natural law teaching, which was not in the first place natural public law, although it had some implications in this respect. Yes.

Now³⁴ let us read at least the first paragraph so that we get a notion of what it is about.

Mr. Reinken:

Of all the³⁵ compacts by which a number of people join themselves into a society,"^{xi} social pact, "the compact for the establishment of a *civic constitution*^{xii} is of such a particular kind that this compact is intrinsically distinct from all other compacts in the principle of its constitution.^{xiii}

Shall I try to read—?

LS: Forget this paragraph.

Reinken:

^{xi} In original: "(*pactum sociale*)."

^{xii} In original: "(*pactum unionis civilis*)."

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, 415.

The joining of many persons for some common end which they all share is an element in all social compacts. But a joining of many is an end in itself which every one of them *ought to have*. In other words, a joining which is an absolute and first duty in any external relations among human beings who cannot avoid having mutual influence, such a union is only to be encountered in a society which has reached the civic state; that is, the state constituting a commonwealth.^{xiv} The end which is a duty in itself in such external relations and which is itself the supreme formal condition of all other external duties, is the *right* of human beings [to live] *under public-coercive laws* by which every man's [right] is determined and secured against the interference of every other man.^{xv}

LS: Ya. No—well, right is not [that] by which everyone is given what is³⁶ his soon. The right is not specifically mentioned. So the social contract is distinguished from all other contracts by this fact: that it has a purpose which is in itself an end, and an end which *everyone* ought to have, which is the unconditional and the first duty of man. An ordinary contract by which business partners make a company³⁷ doesn't have the character of a duty. But even marriage does not have this character because man as man is under no obligation to marry, as Kant the bachelor would have to admit as a matter of course. Good.

Now so Kant begins then with this notion of the social³⁸ contract which has such a long history, and which Kant understands almost in the same way as Rousseau—almost, not quite, because the connection with self-preservation as the end of and the purpose for which man enters society, this is abandoned by Kant. By Kant³⁹ the social contract is strictly derivative from a moral duty and this moral duty⁴⁰ is related immediately to freedom, *the* fundamental right of man as man. And now this is developed by Kant in the next paragraph.⁴¹ Let us read the beginning, at least.

Mr. Reinken:

The concept of an external right is derived from the concept of freedom in the external relation of human beings to each other.^{xvi}

LS: In other words, Kant disregards here the whole question of moral freedom within man. He is only concerned with the external freedom, i.e., inter-human freedom. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This concept has nothing at all to do with the purpose which all human beings naturally have; namely, a desire for happiness, nor has it anything to do with the means of achieving such happiness. Thus the desire for happiness must not be included as a ground for determining laws of external right.^{xvii}

^{xiv} In original: "gemeines Wesen."

^{xv} Ibid. Brackets in original.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Ibid.

LS: Ya. And equally excluded, is of course (although Kant does not mention this here) self-preservation. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

Right is the limitation of every man's freedom so that it harmonizes with the freedom of every other man in so far as harmonization is possible—^{xviii}

LS: No. "As that limitation—"

Mr. Reinken: Oh.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: "Insofar as that limitation is possible according to a general law."^{xix}

LS: I.e., the limitation⁴² must be guided by a principle; otherwise, it would be arbitrary. One could say, of course: We'd have to draw a line somewhere, and we cast a lot as to where we draw the line. This is impossible. The drawing of the line by which⁴³ the powers of each are limited must have a principle and a rational principle. And the principle is that it must be a universal law. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Public Law is the totality of external laws which make such a general consonance possible, since every limitation of freedom by the will of another is called coercion. It follows that the civic constitution is a relationship of *free* men, who, despite their freedom for joining with others, are nevertheless placed under coercive laws. This is so because it is so willed by pure *a priori* legislating reason—^{xx}

LS: And so on. We don't have to read that now, yes? So Kant has now defined what is a right and what is public right. And public right is the basis of the other kinds of right⁴⁴ insofar as both are related to law. The private law presupposes a lawgiver, and the lawgiver and his position is a matter for public law. Now, then Kant states the three principles *a priori* on which the state of civil society rests: freedom, equality, and—⁴⁵ well, why not translate it by "independence?" "Autonomy" is a wrong, very wrong translation, which Friedrich . . .

Student: Self-sufficiency?

LS: That is true. Who is self-sufficient? But independence⁴⁶ in the sense in which we speak of economically independent. Kant will make it quite clear in the sequel. And whether you have a better suggestion to make after we have discussed that section, let us know—and that applies of course to everyone. Yes.

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Ibid.

^{xx} Ibid., 415-416.

Mr. Reinken: It's translated "self-sufficiency" later on.

LS: Ya, one can say that, but it is not the—

Mr. Reinken: *Selbstständig*—

LS: Now, and Kant in the immediate sequel explains them, these three *a priori* principles: freedom, equality and independence. What is that freedom? Now let us read a few of these passages.

Mr. Reinken:

I will state the *freedom* of man as man as a principle for the constitution of the commonwealth in the following formula: No one may force anyone to be happy according to his manner of imagining the well-being of other men; instead, everyone may seek his happiness in the way that seems good to him as long as he does not infringe on the freedom of others to pursue a similar purpose, when such freedom may coexist with the freedom of every other man according to a possible and general law.^{xxi}

LS: Yes. Now let us stop here for a moment. So⁴⁷ I have the freedom to seek happiness as I understand happiness, and if this is to have any moral meaning it must mean that I grant this same freedom to everybody else. And that of course limits my freedom. For example, if I might think that⁴⁸ happiness consists in having certain forms of kicks, to use a very frequent public expression now, and these kicks might be harmful to others, they are excluded. But otherwise, for example, if I find it very pleasant to use my leisure time (what was the example which Bacon used?) in playing soccer, then I don't do harm to anyone else unless I try to force others to play with me when I want. Good.

Now here in this connection Kant makes quite clear the political meaning of his fight against the principle of happiness. If happiness is the purpose of civil society, or of men as individual[s] already, then there is no fundamental objection possible to paternal government, government which wants to make⁴⁹ the governed happy—and of course according to the notion of happiness which the governor happens to have. No paternal government is a consequence of the fact that the foundation of the whole doctrine is morality in the Kantian sense of the term. Also (although Kant does not mention this here), it follows that the government can have no concern with the virtue and vices of the governed as such. This is also settled at least in the time of Locke.

In the sequel, number 2, he explains what equality is. The first point which he makes is that all members of civil society are equally subject to the law. And that means for Kant, however, that they are also subject to the head of the state. Kant does not explain here what the head of the state is, but⁵⁰ since he uses this all the time in the singular, we may assume that he is thinking of a king, the normal form of government in Germany and in

^{xxi} Ibid., 416.

other places at that time. And the head of the state is of course not subject to coercion, whereas everybody else is subject. Here the Hobbism of Kant is quite obvious.

Now, but⁵¹ Kant makes clear⁵² in the next paragraph,⁵³ in page 417, line three from bottom, what this equality does not mean.

Mr. Reinken:

The general equality of men as subjects in a state coexists quite readily with the greatest inequality in degrees of the possessions men have, whether the possessions consist of corporeal or spiritual superiority or in material possession besides. Hence the general equality of men also coexists with great inequality of specific rights of which there may be many. Thus it follows that the welfare of one man may depend to a very great extent on the will of another man, just as the poor are dependent on the rich—^{xxii}

LS: Not “just as the poor.” That is not an example. Kant spells it out, what it means, in brackets, namely, the poor and the rich, ya. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

the one who is dependent must obey the other as a child obeys his parents or the wife her husband or again, just as one man has command over another, as one man serves and another pays, etc. Nevertheless, all subjects are equal to each other before the law which, as a pronouncement of the general will, can only be one. This law concerns the form and not the matter of the object regarding which I may possess a right. For no man can coerce another^{xxiii} except through publicly-known law and through its executor, the head of the state, and by this same law every man may resist to the same degree. No one can lose this right to coerce others except through a crime. In other words, no one can make an agreement or other legal transaction to the effect that he has no rights but only duties. By such a contract he would deprive himself even^{xxiv} of [the right to] make a contract, and thus the contract would nullify itself.^{xxv}

LS: In other words,⁵⁴ the last point: no one can surrender his right to equality by contract because the contract presupposes equality, and therefore there is contradiction between the renunciation of equality and the presupposed equality. So⁵⁵ no one can sell himself into slavery, but otherwise the greatest inequality is possible. For Kant this causes no difficulty, as you see.

Now let us read the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxii} Ibid., 417-418.

^{xxiii} In original: “[under constitutional government].” Brackets in original.

^{xxiv} “even” is not in the original.

^{xxv} Ibid., 418. Brackets in original.

From this concept of the equality of man as subjects in a commonwealth the following formula is derived; Every member of a commonwealth must be able to reach every level of status in the commonwealth which can belong to a subject and which [he can achieve] by his talent, his industry or his good fortune. No fellow^{xxvi} subject may stand in his way as a result of hereditary privilege and thus keep him and his descendants down forever.^{xxvii}

LS: Yes. Now, that is implied in equality as Kant means it, what's now called "open society." Yes. And now let us read. There is this important passage in the next paragraph. "Since all right consists only in the limitation—"

Mr. Reinken: Of, yes. This isn't in our English.

LS: Oh, that is not there?

Mr. Reinken: Yes. And Friedrich didn't even give us the dots.

LS: I see. Ya.⁵⁶ Because there is one remark which is implied, but which is made clear in the sequel: "Legislation according to which⁵⁷ all men who belong to a people as subjects are in a⁵⁸ juridical state altogether, namely, the equality of action and reaction of an arbitrariness that limits itself *mutually* according to the universal law of freedom."^{xxviii}

This mutual limitation, that is the thing which I call the horizontal limitation of horizons: that men are limited by other men who have an interest in limiting them, you know, a self-interest in limiting them for their own benefit. And therefore this limitation is effective, contrary to a vertical limitation coming from God or from the natural end of man—and according to this view,⁵⁹ these are not effective means of limitation.

Now⁶⁰ on page 419, line 3 following.

Mr. Reinken: "He may bequeath everything else because," other than status, because material things do not concern the personality and can be acquired as property and disposed of again. In the line of succession this may cause a considerable inequality of wealth among members of the commonwealth (such as the inequality between the mercenary and his employer, the estate owner and the hired man) . . . No man can lose the equality [he has in the commonwealth as a subject] except through his own crime and especially he cannot lose that equality through a contract or as a result of military occupation. For he cannot cease, by any legal act, either his own or another's, to be master of himself. No man may enter into the class of domestic animals, which can be used for all services the master pleases and which are maintained in service without their consent as long as the master wishes, even though he is subject to the restriction not to cripple or

^{xxvi} "fellow" not in original.

^{xxvii} Ibid.

^{xxviii} Ak 8:292.

kill them (which may, as with the Indians, be sanctioned by religion). Man may be considered happy in any condition if he is conscious that his condition is due to himself, his ability, or his earnest effort or to circumstances for which others cannot be blamed. But [he may not be considered happy] if his condition is due to the irresistible will of another and if he does not rise to the same status as others who, as his co-subjects, had no advantage over him as far as rights are concerned.^{xxix}

LS: So in other words, Kant does not allow that inequalities due to society (as people now say), as distinguished from the law, give a legal claim. Inequality which is due to chance is of no concern as far as right is concerned. Of course, these practical inequalities may be more annoying and revolting than the legal inequalities. That is the old story. But Kant would say that that is of no interest because this has to do with happiness, and we are concerned with right. And it leads of course to the question which is the famous saying of Anatole France, that the poor and the rich are equally forbidden to sleep under bridges. And what was the other thing?

Student: To steal bread, I think.

LS: No, no. No, it was to sleep under bridges and—what was the second thing?^{xxx} Never mind, [a] similar thing. In other words, things which no rich man has ever attempted to do. Good. And Kant is here quite old-fashioned.

Now we come to the third point, this independence, ya—one can say *sibi sufficientia*, Kant says. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: This self-standing.

LS: Ya, let us see what this means in practice. In other words, Kant makes the distinction between active and passive citizenship, and only men of property, however small, can be active citizens. That was, of course, a principle very well-known at that time and I think also in this country, at least in some states.

Yes. Let us read in this number 3, on page [420], “All right depends on laws—”

Mr. Reinken: 420, line 4.

All right depends upon laws. A publicly-known law determining what everyone shall be legally permitted or forbidden^{xxxi} is an act of the public will from which all right proceeds and which cannot itself act contrary to right. For this purpose—
^{xxxii}

^{xxix} Kant, *Theory and Practice*, 419. Brackets and ellipsis in original.

^{xxx} Beg in the streets, and steal loaves of bread.

^{xxxi} In original: “[to do].” Brackets in original.

^{xxxii} Ibid., 420.

LS: Ya.⁶¹ Kant explains here in a somewhat clearer way than Rousseau himself had done what Rousseau meant when he said, “The general will cannot err.” You see the point is this: if we are to be subjected to the law, to the positive law, without any possibility of appeal to a natural law—that was the key point in Rousseau, the idea being [that] such appeals are ineffectual. And in order to make these appeals unnecessary, you have to have a construction of the commonwealth which makes it *impossible* for the legislator to give unjust laws.

And here Kant states the principle: No one can do to himself any injustice. *Volenti non fit injuria*, the old Roman⁶² principle. ⁶³Therefore, if the citizen body assembled imposes itself a law, it cannot do itself injustice, because it wills it. Now this is very good in theory, but how did it work out in practice we can say? Now let us see. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

For this purpose no other will is possible but the will of the entire people because [through this will] all men decide about all men and hence everyone decides about himself. For no one can be considered unjust to himself.^{xxxiii}

LS: So in other words, someone who does not belong to the people, who is a monarch or king or whatever,⁶⁴ of course can very well do injustice. Someone who is above the law can very well establish a law which is bad or unjust, but not⁶⁵ if you impose a law on yourself as well as on others in the act of legislation. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This basic law which originates only in the general and united will of the people is called the *original contract*.⁶⁶

He who has the right to vote on basic legislation is called a citizen [pardon the German⁶⁷—R] between *Staatsbürger* and *Stadtbürger*, who is a bourgeois.^{xxxiv}

LS: In other words, this distinction,⁶⁸ which was made by Rousseau before and migrated then to Marx and led to his concept of the bourgeois, and as is here used. Yes. Now what is a citizen as distinguished from the *Bürger*? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

The requisite quality for this^{xxxv}, apart from the natural one that the person not be a child or a woman, is only this: that such a person be *his own master* (*sui iuris*) and hence, that he have some property (under which we may include any art, craft, or science) that would provide him with sustenance.^{xxxvi} A man who, when he must earn a livelihood from others, acquires property only by selling what is his own and not by conceding to others the right to make use of his strength. Consequently he *serves* no

^{xxxiii} Ibid. Brackets are in the text.

^{xxxiv} Ibid. In original: “(citoyen, i.e, Staatsbürger, not Stadtbürger, i.e., bourgeois).”

^{xxxv} In original: “[status].” Brackets in original.

^{xxxvi} In original: “[To put this another way, he must be].”

one, in the strict sense of the word, but the commonweal. In this respect—

xxxvii

LS: Now let us see. What then is the precise line of demarcation between the active and the passive citizens? The passive citizen is a man who can only live by permitting others to use his own powers. More simply, the man who cannot be [an] active citizen is the one who has to sell his own powers, as distinguished from others who can live by selling their property. Your powers—say, of the man who carries heavy burdens, these powers are not properties strictly speaking. You cannot sell them, but you can sell the use of them. This is the line which Kant draws.

And the last sentence of the footnote is quite interesting. Do you have that? The footnote, the last sentence. Kant gives some examples.⁶⁹ Well, let us read a few.

Mr. Reinken:

the shopkeeper, the day laborer and the hairdresser. These are *operarii*, operators, not artisans, *artifices*, in the wider extension of the word, and thus not members of the state, and therefore, not qualified to be *Bürger*, citizens—^{xxxviii}

LS: Ya, ya. In other words, the domestic servant, the shop assistant, and even the barber. But the man to whom I give the task to work out my—

Mr. Reinken: Firewood.

LS: “firewood, or the tailor to whom I give my clothes, they are different. They have property . . .” Read last sentence of the note, which is sufficient for our present purposes.

Mr. Reinken:

It is, I confess, somewhat hard to make precise the requirement which allows us to state that—

LS: Why don’t you— isn’t it in the translation?

Mr. Reinken: No.

LS: “Is somewhat hard to determine the requirements in order to raise a claim to the status of a man who is his own master.” For an *a priori* doctrine is rather bad. Good.⁷⁰ Now, what was the usual view? I mean the usual explanation or justification of this common practice, that people without property, however small, cannot be citizens, was of course not *a priori*.

Student: So that they have a stake in society.⁷¹

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} Ak 8:295. This note is not present in the translation the class is using. Strauss repeats “ya” throughout, confirming Reinken’s translation.

LS: Ya, sure. They have a stake in society or, as Rousseau puts it, they might well sell their liberty for bread, and therefore they ought not to have the vote.⁷² This experiential reason is excluded by the *a priori* character of Kant's doctrine⁷³; nevertheless, he preserves this practice of his time.⁷⁴

Mr. Reinken: Is it only in response to Kant that Marx raises this business of the laborer being the proprietor?

LS: Oh no, no.

Mr. Reinken: Or that had been committed by the⁷⁵ English theorists—

LS: Ya, sure, Adam Smith, much more, ya. In these matters Kant follows Adam Smith. He refers to him somewhere.

Mr. Reinken: Well, if you are going to admit that the day laborer is a proprietor over his labor, that you—

LS: Yes, but the trouble is that this kind of property is different from what ordinarily is called property.

Student: Real property.

LS: Ya. Well, yes, real and also mobile. Mr. Schaeffer?

Mr. Schaeffer: I'm trying to understand what Kant is getting at by including artists and scientists among those having property. The difference seems to be that the man who has an art or science which is higher than a barber is somehow exercising his rationality.

LS: Ya,⁷⁶ I think the point is this: Why the barber? In the case of the domestic servant one can understand—you know, he is in a way in the hands of his master, and he would of course vote as his master tells him, and so on. But why the poor barber? I believe that has something to do⁷⁷ with an entirely different notion just inherited, which we can understand on the basis of Aristotle who discusses these matters. There are certain things which degrade a man, according to the gentleman view, and especially those which consist⁷⁸ in serving the body of another human being. So no one is degraded⁷⁹ by doing his own shaving, but if you shave somebody else—unless for fun, or maybe as a physician, but if you do this as a way of earning a living, it's degrading. And this is of course carried over, this kind of thing, into later life. Today this has been almost completely forgotten. This example of course shows very well that the consideration of happiness does have some utility in political matters. After all, the basis of universal suffrage as it came to be understood in the nineteenth century, especially in the second half, was that these masses of people have no possibility of improving their lot and of protecting their simple rights except if they get the vote. And for Kant this is then only an irrelevant consideration of happiness. Yes.

Now then there is another point which Kant makes clear⁸⁰ on page 421, the second paragraph, when he—how does he call it?

Mr. Reinken: Basic law?

All who possess the right to vote must agree on this basic law of how to arrive at public justice; [for if they did not] there would be a conflict of law between those who agree to it and those who do not, which would necessitate a still higher legal principle to decide the issue. Since such general agreement cannot be expected of an entire people, only a majority of the votes must be considered to be the best that can be attained. In a large nation even this majority will not be that of the voters, but merely that of delegates representing the people. But then this principle of being satisfied by a majority will have to be presumed as having been accepted by general agreement; that is, through a contract, and hence [this principle will have to be presumed to be] the supreme reason for constituting a civic constitution.^{xxxix}

LS: So in other words, the legislator is not the people, but the elected representatives of the people. That is connected with the very notion of the social contract. And Kant makes then clear in the next paragraph that this original contract ⁸¹alone can be the basis of a civil society, and hence a thoroughly legitimate society. This original contract, however, is not to be presupposed to be a *fact*. It would be impossible as such a fact, as Kant says in parenthesis. But it is a mere idea of reason. And now, do you have that, Mr. Reinken? “The mere idea of reason, which however has its indubitable—”

Mr. Reinken:

practical reality: namely, to oblige every legislator to give us laws in such a manner that the laws *could* have originated from the united will of the entire people and to regard every subject in so far as he is a citizen as though he had consented to such [an expression of the general] will. This is the testing stone of the rightness of every publicly-known law, for if the law were such that it was impossible for an entire people to give consent to it (as for example a law that a certain class of subjects, by inheritance, should have the privilege of the *status of lords*), then such a law is unjust. On the other hand, if there is a mere *possibility* that a people might consent to a (certain) law, then it is a duty to consider that the law is just, even though at the moment the people might be in such a position or have a point of view that would result in their refusing to give their consent to it if asked.^{xl}

LS: So now⁸² what is the problem which Kant tries to solve in this somewhat strange way? That the fact that you do not like a law is no reason to disobey it was always taken for granted, and I suppose it still is, although there may be some confusion in some

^{xxxix} Ibid., 421. Brackets in original.

^{xl} Ibid., 422. Brackets in original.

quarters. But the question is: Am I obliged to obey⁸³ an unjust law? And Kant⁸⁴ states now the principle, which permits us to distinguish between a just and [an] unjust law.

Rousseau tried to find a quasi-mechanical guarantee for the justness of laws, by having the citizen body assemble without representatives who might be bribed and develop a special interest different from that of the people in general. So the whole citizen body assembled openly discusses the laws and reaches a conclusion. And Rousseau believed too, at least in some passages, that⁸⁵ the outcome of such deliberations cannot but be a just law. Yes?

Student: When Kant was talking about the public will and said “no one can be unjust to himself,” would that statement apply only to the original contract?

LS: No, no. The original contract itself is of no use. It must be present, it must be what is effective in present legislation.

Same Student: Well, if no one can be unjust to himself, how is it that unjust laws can be passed?

LS:⁸⁶ The point which Rousseau made on the basis of certain you can say legal fictions, or legal maxims at least, was that the general will as Rousseau called it, the only will which deserves to be regarded as the just legislator, cannot err, i.e., cannot pass unjust laws.⁸⁷ The point being one ingredient of the argument is for that which Kant mentions even more strongly.⁸⁸ I mean, if you wish something which is even hurtful to you, but if you wish it,⁸⁹ no injustice happens to you. Well, a simple case. You buy something which it is foolish to buy, but⁹⁰ it's your fault. *Caveat emptor*. [Students chuckle] And⁹¹ the principle generates *volenti non fit injuria*: to him who wills, no injustice happens, and which is of course questionable from quite a few points of view, but for⁹² many crude practical purposes it is sufficient. Now therefore the people as people cannot do injustice to itself as people, whereas a king, separated from the people, could very well do injustice to the people.

Same Student: Well, that's why I asked, did it only apply to the original contract? How does the legislator become—⁹³

LS: Divorced. Ya, that is Kant's wholly un-Rousseauan point. Kant understands here the legislator to be someone different from the citizen body assembled. And therefore the contract leading to the town meeting, to the assembly of the citizens, cannot be a fact but must be a mere idea of reason which is to guide the king. So the king⁹⁴ is morally obliged, whenever he makes a law, to raise this question: Could the people have assented to this law or given itself this law? And⁹⁵ he doesn't need any other criterion. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: Isn't one of the necessary conditions, possibly in Rousseau and Kant both, of the members casting their votes in the general will, that when they go into the voting booth they somehow⁹⁶ practically forget, each of them, that he happens to be an estate owner or not to be an estate owner⁹⁷ and considers the issue *a priori*?

LS: Ya, but⁹⁸ Rousseau was not blind to these things. He has written quite a few chapters on the people, and how the people must be constituted if this thing is to work. For example, if there is very great economic inequality, as they call it now, then it wouldn't work. If there is great ethnic heterogeneity, it⁹⁹ will not work. So in other words,¹⁰⁰ great dissimilarities among the citizens must keep within relatively narrow bounds. That was Rousseau's position.

Mr. Reinken: In other words, there's been empirical conditions—

LS: Yes, sure. Rousseau never claimed to have an *a priori* theory.

Mr. Reinken: But—

LS: Kant does, and therefore he cannot bring in this kind of considerations. On the other hand, Kant remains much closer to practice, because he speaks of a monarchic legislator separate from the people, whereas Rousseau thought of small communities like his native Geneva, or the ancient cities, classical cities and so, as the normal political unit. Now, yes?

Student: It seems to me that Kant's talk about the mere possibility that people will consent to something, he's not really talking about voting booths and empirical consent, but—

LS: No. No voting studies in Kant. No voting studies in Kant. No polls. [Students chuckle] No, he must simply say, the legislator asks himself how the people as *sensible* human beings, ya? Sensible human beings, what the people as¹⁰¹ sensible . . . human beings who would have accepted.

Same Student: I am thinking of the essay *What is Enlightenment?* and there it is perfectly clear that even if¹⁰² a present generation would do something to renounce, say, enlightenment, even then that would be really invalid, as the general will—

LS: He refers to that here in this writing also.¹⁰³ What they¹⁰⁴ might agree to [when] ground down by poverty, ignorance, and what have you—that, of course, no.¹⁰⁵ That could never lead to rational laws. But of what they reasonably¹⁰⁶ would assent, this could lead to rational laws.

Same Student: So the general will really just comes really out of the categorical imperative, really?

LS:¹⁰⁷ Ya, with relatively minor mediations [laughter], that is perfectly true. Yes. Now let us read this note here, which I believe is translated, isn't it?

Mr. Reinken:

For example, if a war tax, proportional for all subjects, were imposed, the subjects cannot, because the tax is onerous, claim that the tax is unjust because the war is unnecessary in their opinion. On that question they are not entitled to judge—^{xli}

LS: You know that is a matter strictly for the executive, as you would say. Yes?

Student: “as it is always possible that the war was inevitable [laughter] and hence the tax is indispensable and so must be considered rightful in the judgment of the subjects.”^{xlii}

LS:¹⁰⁸ Right. Ya, “legitimate” would perhaps be a better translation. In other words, you cannot make any objection to it on the ground of right. As regards prudence, experience, and so, that is a long question. We are entitled to do quite a few things which may be inexpedient. Think of many marriages which are perfectly legitimate and yet prove to be inexpedient . . . So this is no . . . point. Yes.

Now¹⁰⁹ in the sequel, then, Kant makes clear—and now we come to key point, because up to now we have been only concerned [with the question]: How we can get just laws? But what about unjust laws? That is the interesting question, and Kant makes clear: no right to resist, to disobey bad and unjust laws. First, bad laws, and the point is¹¹⁰—that is not in the translation. Again, the happiness of the subject is not the concern of the legislator, but only the right.

On page 423, beginning of paragraph 2.

Mr. Reinken:

From this it follows that all resistance against the supreme legislative power, all instigation to rebellion, is the worst and most punishable crime in a commonwealth because this destroys the foundation of a commonwealth.^{xliii}

LS: Ya.¹¹¹ Later on there is a note which also has been omitted. Kant denies altogether a right based on necessity. *Ius in casu necessitates*.^{xliv} For example, there is a right which I have to kill a man who tries to kill me.¹¹² And Kant denies that there is such a *casu necessitates* except in the case where duties conflict one another. But this can only mean that absolute duties¹¹³ conflict with conditioned duties. For example, a man has a duty to his father, to help and all this if he can. But if his father becomes a traitor, or a spy, or something of this kind, then it is a duty of the son according to Kant to denounce¹¹⁴ his father. This duty to denounce is an absolute, unconditioned duty, whereas the duty to help his father is subordinate to the other and therefore a conditioned duty. Now generally stated, Kant denies that there can be a strict conflict of duties and naturally, if the moral law is the law of reason, and the principle of reason is the principle of contradiction, there cannot be a conflict of duty.

^{xli} Ibid.

^{xlii} Ibid.

^{xliii} Ibid., 423.

^{xliv} Ak 8:300. “*Ius in*” is only in the main text (line 8). The note has only “*casus necessitates*.”

And he discusses here the case of the famous case of the two shipwrecked men on the same plank and one, in order to save himself, pushes the other into the sea. And Kant says: To preserve my life is only a conditioned duty, namely,¹¹⁵ if I can do it without a crime. But to kill another man who¹¹⁶ does not bring me in any danger: not to kill such a man, that is an unconditioned duty. Therefore, to apply to our case, there¹¹⁷ [can] be no right to resist government or to rebel under any circumstance. That is an unconditioned duty.

Kant is aware that in taking this view he differs from the more common view of the natural law teachers, who admitted a right to resist tyranny. That is on page 424. And—

Mr. Reinken: “I know a respected man—”

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Reinken: Achenwall.^{xlv}

LS: Achenwall, ya. Ya, but as Friedrich rightly says, Locke says the same thing.

Student: Why does he pick somebody like Achenwall?

LS: Because he was a very respected German professor of natural law. And this perfectly normal man,¹¹⁸ wholly uncontroversial, mainstream—even he had said [that] you may, in absolutistic Germany, you may resist or perhaps kill a tyrant. And Kant has therefore said, “See, if even such a nice man [students chuckle] says such a horrible thing”—not Locke, who was after all never a professor and whom one could disregard here. Yes.

Now Kant’s ground is stated, again that is not in the translation. The key point is this: you cannot generalize this, universalize this maxim:¹¹⁹ I refuse to obey the government; my maxim is to refuse to obey the government or to rebel in case the government does something which I regard as unjust. Try to universalize it—that’s Kant’s point, and you will see it is not universalizable. And therefore it is not morally possible. So, and that is of course diametrically opposed to the tradition and especially to Burke, as stated in Kant’s own age.¹²⁰ For Kant there is no limitation of these universal laws by consideration of the circumstances. This is completely out of—yes?

Student: Well, if the end of society is neither happiness nor self-preservation, then it would seem that that principle¹²¹ stating the right of revolution is universalizable. It will produce a certain amount of anarchy, but—

LS: Ya, but that means, however, [that] you are under an obligation to do everything in your power to keep a state in which there is rule of law. Now a revolution means necessarily a suspension, a break in that rule of law. And therefore you contradict yourself.¹²² It wouldn’t work out.

^{xlv} Gottfried Achenwall (1719-1772), German philosopher and statistician.

Now a few more points, should we not be able to finish this. Kant makes clear in the sequel that the root of the evil, i.e., what induces men to believe in a right of tyrannicide or so, is the principle of happiness.¹²³ They regard themselves as miserable, as oppressed, or what have you, and therefore they think they are entitled to kill a fellow like Nero, or maybe a less Neronian man.¹²⁴

Kant is then compelled to criticize¹²⁵ British doctrine and practice of revolution, and the key point here is this: the English are proud of the Glorious Rebellion, but on the other hand, they don't dare to be proud of it because they feel that it is not a principle which can so easily be avowed. And therefore they have said that James II was not deposed but that he lay down the crown, which is part of the story. Ya, sure. But in other words (and Kant makes this quite clear), is that . . . have a footnote here.

Mr. Reinken:

No right in a state can be kept under cover by a secret mental reservation, least of all the right [of revolution] which the people claim as belonging to the constitution, because all laws derived from it must be considered to have sprung from a public will. Therefore the constitution would, if it permitted revolution, have to declare this right publicly as well as the procedure by which to make use of it.^{xlvi} [Students chuckle]

LS:¹²⁶ Kant will discuss this principle of publicity as the simple test¹²⁷ of morality in *Perpetual Peace*. So according to Kant, there cannot be *dormant* rights, rights *prudently concealed* and only to be appealed to in emergency cases.

I read to you a passage from a Protestant writer of the late seventeenth century, Jurieu.^{xlvii} He held that it is better for public peace that the people do not know the true extent of their powers, meaning their right to rebel. The rights of the people are “remedies which must not be wasted or applied in the case of minor wrongs. They are mysteries which must not be profaned by exposing them too much before the eyes of the common herd. When it comes to the destruction of the state or religion, then [these remedies] can be produced; beyond that I do not think it evil that they should be covered with silence.”^{xlviii} For Kant this is a height of immorality. But most people would say that it is a prudent thing, that there are fires which cannot be used, ya, and should not be too much in sight, but nevertheless be kept in reserve.¹²⁸

So there is then no possibility of disobeying the government, the law, and no right of rebellion whatever. This is all in a full agreement with Hobbes, of course, and not with Locke or Rousseau, despite the fact that Hobbes is concerned with *security* at all costs, you know? Even under Nero, if you don't happen to be a courtier, which would be great folly in the first place [laughter], you are much safer than you would be in a civil war. That's Hobbes's simple reason.

^{xlvi} Ibid., 426. Brackets in original.

^{xlvii} Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713), French Protestant pastor and professor of theology.

^{xlviii} These passages are also quoted in Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 300, n. 75. Brackets in original.

Kant is not concerned with security in this sense, but with the security of right. And doubtless, right and its basis becomes questionable as long as there is a civil war. Who is the legislator in such a period?¹²⁹ Or does Kant oppose Hobbes? We have to¹³⁰ discuss this briefly. Page 426, bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

Hobbes is of the opposite opinion. According to him, *op. cit.*,¹³¹ the head of the state is not obliged to anything by contract and he can act contrary to law and right against the citizen in whatever way he might decide regarding him. This proposition would be correct if that which is contrary to law and right were understood to mean a kind of injury providing the injured with a right against him who has acted contrary to law and right.^{xlix}

LS: Not a coercive right, ya? In other words, Kant agrees [that] even against Nero, there is no *coercive* right of the subjects. Against Nero, ya? No writ runs against the king. How does Kant conclude this thought?¹³² “But stated so generally—”

Mr. Reinken: “generally as Hobbes does, the proposition is terrifying.”¹

LS: Ya. Now, so why is it terrifying? Because it is obviously necessary to admit that such beasts like Nero can do wrong. And it may be a crude rule of legal procedure to say the king can do no wrong, but this cannot be seriously true. It may be true in law courts, but not simply. And that is the point¹³³ where Kant disagrees with Hobbes.

The situation with Hobbes is a bit more complicated, and you can say Hobbes finds a verbal way out. He says the king can do no wrong, the sovereign can do no wrong. He can do no injustice. But he can be *inequitable*, and i.e., every transgression of the natural law, the moral law is an act of inequity, iniquity, but not of injustice. Well, that is all we need, ya? Namely, an objective criterion for distinguishing between permissible and impermissible acts of the sovereign. But verbally, Kant is right against Locke because Locke speaks of such considerations¹³⁴ of equity and inequity are not relevant politically, but they are possible.

And then Kant shows another point of deviation from Locke, although not explicitly stated as such. What we need in order to keep the governors away from Neronic conduct is freedom of the pen, freedom of the press. Kant does not discuss what will happen if the Nero in question does not permit freedom of the press, but I’d suppose that you have still to go on obeying. But the question which we must answer, in conclusion: Why is this critique of Hobbes related to the issue of theory and practice? And I think we find the answer on page 428, in the third paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Nowhere do people engaged in practical pursuit speak with more pretentiousness derogatively of theory and neglecting all pure rational

^{xlix} Kant, *Theory and Practice*, 426-427.

¹ *Ibid.*, 427.

principles, than on the question of what is required for a good constitution. This is because a legal constitution which has existed a long time accustoms people to its rule by and by and makes them inclined to evaluate their happiness as well as their rights in the light of the conditions under which everything has been quietly going forward. Men fail to do the opposite; namely, to evaluate the existing constitution according to concepts^{li} provided by reason in regard to both happiness and right. As a result, men prefer this passive state to the dangerous task of seeking a better one. They are following the maxim which Hippocrates urges doctors to keep in mind: *Judgment is uncertain and experiment dangerous*.^{lii} In spite of their differences, all constitutions which have existed a long time, whatever their faults, produce one and the same result; namely that people become satisfied with what they have. It follows from this that in considering people's welfare, theory is apparently not valued but all depends upon practices derived—^{liii}

LS: No,¹³⁵ there is in fact no theory.¹³⁶ If there is in fact no theory if you consider the well-being of the people, but everything¹³⁷ is based on a practice which follows or obeys experience. So that is the point. All other moral and political teachers (and therefore, in particular, also Hobbes) take their bearings by the happiness of the individual or the people, and not by the moral law. And as a consequence, they¹³⁸ cannot have a theory, strictly speaking, and they must be worshippers of practice based on previous experience and law. This is the connection.

¹ Deleted "I...."

² Deleted "that...that...that...the, I have a sore throat...."

³ Deleted "goes...."

⁴ Deleted "but...."

⁵ Deleted "when was Ames...."

⁶ Deleted "**Student:** What is...against Hobbes?"

⁷ Deleted "It seems to me the crucial difference is....I think Hobbes and Kant agree that...."

⁸ Deleted "where the...."

⁹ Deleted "And...."

¹⁰ Deleted "You read...."

¹¹ Deleted "That is...."

¹² Deleted "in...."

¹³ Deleted "Only...."

¹⁴ Deleted "Where does this...."

¹⁵ Deleted "that...."

¹⁶ Deleted "And it is...."

¹⁷ Deleted "the English translation came...."

¹⁸ Deleted "It is fairly possible that...."

¹⁹ Deleted "And...."

²⁰ Deleted "has given one...."

²¹ Deleted "murders and so on...."

²² Deleted "and...."

²³ Deleted "is."

^{li} In original: "[standards]." Brackets in original.

^{lii} In original: "*(Judicium anceps, experimentum periculosum)*."

^{liii} Ibid., 428.

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- 24 Deleted "is...was...."
 25 Deleted "let us...this...."
 26 Deleted "theoretical...."
 27 Deleted "here...an act has...."
 28 Deleted "This is not...."
 29 Deleted "of course what often...."
 30 Deleted "who are...."
 31 Deleted "we know of...."
 32 Changed from "professors."
 33 Deleted "works of...."
 34 Deleted "how does...."
 35 Deleted "'concepts by which a number of people—' **LS:** 'Contracts.' **Reinken:** 'Compacts,' pardon. **LS:** Or 'compacts.' **Reinken:** 'Compacts,' my slip."
 36 Deleted "to."
 37 Deleted "is of course...."
 38 Deleted "compact which has...."
 39 Deleted "it is...."
 40 Deleted "has...."
 41 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'The—' **LS:** Yeah, that...."
 42 Deleted "must be made on...."
 43 Deleted "the right of each is limited...."
 44 Deleted "because it...or...."
 45 Deleted "self...."
 46 Deleted "in the simple...."
 47 Deleted "the freedom...."
 48 Deleted "freedom exists in...."
 49 Deleted "his...."
 50 Deleted "he...."
 51 Deleted "there is...."
 52 Deleted "what the...."
 53 Deleted "what...."
 54 Deleted "no one...."
 55 Deleted "there cannot be...."
 56 Deleted "No, no...."
 57 Deleted "all people who belong...."
 58 Deleted "legal...."
 59 Deleted "not...."
 60 Deleted "the...yes...in...."
 61 Deleted "that is a great...."
 62 Deleted "law...."
 63 Deleted "now and."
 64 Deleted "is...."
 65 Deleted "if you are...."
 66 Deleted "'He—' **LS:** Yeah, let us stop here for a moment. No, go on, yeah, I'm sorry."
 67 Deleted "of...."
 68 Deleted "which has become...."
 69 Deleted "for example...."
 70 Deleted "Now and that of course...."
 71 Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** That they have a stake in society?"
 72 Deleted "Kant of course...."
 73 Deleted "and therefore...."
 74 Deleted "**Reinken:** Is it—? **LS:** Pardon?"
 75 Deleted "**LS:** No, this—"
 76 Deleted "Kant...."
 77 Deleted "with something...."

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- 78 Deleted “in doing...in...”
 79 Deleted “by shaving...”
 80 Deleted “in the...”
 81 Deleted “which.”
 82 Deleted “the question...”
 83 Deleted “a just law...”
 84 Deleted “must now...”
 85 Deleted “this...”
 86 Deleted “Yeah but...”
 87 Deleted “And the...”
 88 Deleted “The people, the body of the people...no one...”
 89 Deleted “and then...and then you...”
 90 Deleted “no one...you...”
 91 Deleted “similarly...but it is...the whole...”
 92 Deleted “crude...”
 93 Deleted “well, I—”
 94 Deleted “is to be...”
 95 Deleted “that is...”
 96 Deleted “**LS**: [inaudible words]. Yeah.”
 97 Deleted “**LS**: Yeah this—”
 98 Deleted “**Reinken**: The general will—”
 99 Deleted “is not...”
 100 Deleted “there must be a...”
 101 Deleted “his...”
 102 Deleted “a people...”
 103 Deleted “So no...what they could not...”
 104 Deleted “have...”
 105 Deleted “That would not be...”
 106 Deleted “could...”
 107 Deleted “In a...”
 108 Deleted “Yeah that is...”
 109 Deleted “in the next...”
 110 Deleted “let me see where that...in...”
 111 Deleted “And do you have...”
 112 Deleted “But here the...”
 113 Deleted “conflict with unconditioned duties...”
 114 Deleted “him...”
 115 Deleted “if it can’t... if it can happen without crime, can...”
 116 Deleted “has...”
 117 Deleted “cannot...”
 118 Deleted “how would it...”
 119 Deleted “I want to...”
 120 Deleted “There is no...”
 121 Deleted “**LS**: Pardon? I beg your pardon. **Same Student**: If the end of the society is not self-preservation or happiness— **LS**: Yeah. **Same Student**: then it would seem that that principle.”
 122 Deleted “by being...”
 123 Deleted “They are...”
 124 Deleted “And there...”
 125 Deleted “British revolution...”
 126 Deleted “So in other...you see. That is...we come back...”
 127 Deleted “in...in *Perpetual*...”
 128 Deleted “Now...”
 129 Deleted “Why, then...why is Kant...”
 130 Deleted “discover...”
 131 Text has “(*de Cive*, 27 Chap. 7, 14).”

¹³² Deleted “**Reinken:** ‘But—’”

¹³³ Deleted “where Rousseau....”

¹³⁴ Deleted “of iniquity....”

¹³⁵ Deleted “that is not....”

¹³⁶ Deleted “Kant goes beyond what....”

¹³⁷ Deleted “follows....”

¹³⁸ Deleted “are....”

Session 13: May 16, 1967

Leo Strauss: Thank you, that was a fine paperⁱ and also very finely delivered—I mean, very distinctly. And also the supererogatory quality of having some injection of humor. [Students chuckle] I like this one . . . Now,¹ you are a political scientist, Mr. . . . ?

Student: I am a part-time political scientist.

LS: What is your primary education?

Same Student: No, my original training was with theology, and I'm a clergyman.
[Laughter]

LS: I noticed that. I expected that. But² still, you are at present a political scientist, aren't you?

Same Student: No, I am a Methodist chaplain.

LS: Oh, I am sorry, then. I see. Because I was wondering what an orthodox social scientist would say if, in this building in a political science seminar, we are discussing the end of all things? What would you say to a social scientist who would make this objection: that this is not a proper subject for social scientists?

Same Student: Well, insofar as a social scientist is a valuing being, he has to take into consideration the end of those values and some consideration of the eschaton, I suppose.

LS: But do you have to go so far? I mean, what is the greatest, most awful problem concerning, if not social scientists, at least socially and politically interested people today? You read it every day in the newspapers.

Same Student: You mean the breakdown of morality?³

LS: No, I mean something much more terrible, in a way. [Laughter] Really, the end of all things, as they believe. You know what I mean?

Same Student: You mean in terms of the imminent danger of conflagration?

LS: Thermonuclear war.⁴ According to a very common interpretation, the end of all things. [Laughter] So we are not so far away [laughter] from political things.

Now the second question which I would like to address to you is this: this essay of Kant, *The End of All Things*, is here reprinted in a book called *On History*. What is the

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

connection⁵ between the end of all things and the problem with which we are here primarily concerned, the problem of history?

Same Student:⁶ The first section's the natural end of all things, which then relates to morality, which is concerned about consequences, and thus history.

LS: But⁷ Kant opens the essay with, quoting the phrase in German: "Man goes when he dies, he goes from time into eternity." This doesn't seem to have any immediate connection with the problem of history. Does it?

Same Student: No, as far as I can see, he suggests that this does not have any noumenal content, and therefore it can only be related to morality.

LS: Still,⁸ I mean, right on the surface Kant begins with a certain reflection upon the end of all things, in the sense of the end which every individual meets when dying. And then there is the end of all things in the sense of the end of all history, let us say. And what is your connection between the two things and is this made clear by Kant?

Same Student: I think it's not made clear—

LS: Yes?

Same Student: And he doesn't make a distinction here between the end of personal existence and the end of time as a category of history.

LS: Ya and the end of the human race or so,⁹ on earth, at least, yes.¹⁰ Thank you very much.

I deplore that they did not translate for this volume the third part of Kant's writing, *Theory and Practice*, which deals with the relation of theory and practice in international law, because this is that part of *Theory and Practice* which has the closest connection with the problem of the philosophy of history. That third part of *Theory and Practice* is directed against Kant's contemporary Moses Mendelssohn.ⁱⁱ Mendelssohn had opposed a writing of Mendelssohn's friend, Lessing,ⁱⁱⁱ *The Education of the Human Race*,^{iv} which was a sketch of a philosophy of history, the development of man understood as God's educating the human race and therefore a meaningful process.¹¹ And Mendelssohn rejected that and took ¹²the ordinary older view, meaning [that] history is just the account of ups and downs in morality, in civilization, in science,¹³ in art, which has no rhyme and reason,¹⁴ no direction. The most simple statement of that older view known to me occurs in Xenophon's *Greek History*. This work begins with the expression "thereafter." I

ⁱⁱ Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), German Jewish theologian, Enlightenment philosopher, campaigner for Jewish rights and religious tolerance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), German philosopher and dramatist. Lessing and Mendelssohn shared a famous friendship. The protagonist in Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise* (1779) is modeled on Mendelssohn.

^{iv} Published 1778.

believe that's the only book ever written which begins with the word "thereafter." I have heard of a sermon beginning with the word, but I have never read that sermon, seen that sermon. But still, the answer is very funny. The usual explanation is that Xenophon, continuing Thucydides's history, wrote simply, "thereafter," namely, after the last thing which Thucydides told. Now this would be a sign of a great ineptitude on the part of any writer, I believe. And in addition, the book ends in a sense with the word "thereafter." I mean¹⁵ Xenophon ends¹⁶ his book with the story of the Battle of Leuctra in 362,^v and the Greeks had awaited at that time that this battle will now bring order into the complete confusion in which Greece was before. And then, lo and behold, after the battle the confusion was as great, if not greater, than it was before. And then Xenophon says: But what happened thereafter, that someone else may describe. So one may say it begins and ends with "thereafter," and the lesson which it conveys is this: thereafter, thereafter, thereafter, and all this confusion, or so. [Laughter] That is, we can say, the classic view and which¹⁷ was of course rejected by philosophy of history.

Now this same Mendelssohn, who restated in this late age this older view, was the author of a book called *Phaedo, or On Immortality*,^{vi} which was a kind of Plato's *Phaedo* taken over but made *in usum* for the use of the eighteenth century. You know, the demonstrations were changed and it was at that time a very famous book. And the point is here that Mendelssohn believed in an infinite progress of each individual after death—no progress of the human race, however.

Mendelssohn was attacked for his work *On Immortality* by Herder,¹⁸ with whom we have made a nodding acquaintance in this course. And¹⁹ Herder objects to Mendelssohn on this ground: Mendelssohn had as it were said [that] the whole play of the individual's life takes place only partly on earth, in this life, [and] the greater part in another life. And Herder says, against Mendelssohn, the five acts are in this life. And I think there is a connection between this view that the five acts are in this life, and Herder's turning to philosophy of history. This much²⁰ again about the background of Kant's philosophy of history and the problem peculiar to it.

Now let us turn to *The End of All Things*—or is there any point regarding this general question which you would like to raise? Now,²¹ if it's not the case let us turn then to our writing. Now, in the first two paragraphs Kant makes this point: people, especially in German, say the dying man is going from time to eternity. Now this phrase implies that eternity is not time, or that death is the end of all time. The duration after death is not temporal. Now this duration, which is not temporal, is not intelligible theoretically but it is possibly of moral significance. This is the thought with which Kant opens the essay.

And then he goes on in the third paragraph to the question of the end of all time, but no longer now of the individual but the last day—as the Germans say, the youngest day,

^v The date is 371.

^{vi} *Phädon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1767). Appears in Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe*. Vol III,1: *Schriften zur Philosophie und Ästhetik*, ed. Fritz Bamberger & Leo Strauss (Bad Cannstatt, Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag Günther Holzboog, 1972).

judgment day, doomsday. And here the question arises, there is this complication—that is, doomsday, the day of judgment, but at the same time it²² includes also the end of the physical universe. Now let us read this second half of this paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Thus the Latest^{vii} Day also comprehends the Final Judgment. If now there should be counted among the last things the creation of a new heaven and earth for the habitation of the blessed and a hell for the damned, and not just the end of the world as it appears in its present form—the falling of the stars from the vault of the sky and the collapse of the vault itself (or its disappearance, like a scroll that is rolled up) and the conflagration of both—then that Judgment Day would certainly not be the Latest^{viii} Day, for other days would succeed it. But since the idea of an end of all things does not originate from reasoning about physical things but from reasoning about the moral course of the world and nothing else, the moral course of events can be applied only to the supersensible (which is comprehensible only in relation to the moral). The same is true of the idea of eternity. Thus the representation of those last things which are said to come *after* Doomsday, must only be regarded as making Doomsday and its moral consequences, which are not theoretically conceivable to us, in some way perceptible to us.^{ix}

LS: Yes. So in other words, the end of the physical universe is of no serious consideration to Kant. It could only be a kind of symbol²³ of the Judgment Day. The Last Day, of course, still belongs to time: it is a day. But after that day, nothing *happens* any more; for no *happening* without time, as Kant makes clear in the preceding half of this paragraph.

And now²⁴ this is then settled. And then, in a way, as he does in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents an antinomy. This time, however, of course the substance of the antinomy is different. There are two possibilities: one called unitarianism and the other called dualism. This has nothing to do with unitarianism in the ordinary sense of the term—I mean the denial of trinity; but the Unitarians are those who assert that all men will receive eternal bliss: there may be all kinds of penances in between, but eventually all men will achieve eternal bliss. And the Dualists divide the human race into two classes: those who are blessed or predestined to salvation, and those who are cursed or damned.

And now²⁵ this antinomy can as little be settled by theoretical reason as the four antinomies presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But they can be settled from a practical, a moral point of view. They cannot be settled theoretically for this reason which is itself a moral reason, because no one can know of himself or anybody else whether he deserves eternal bliss or eternal misery. We might be²⁶ regarded as very fine fellows, and

^{vii} In original: “Last.”

^{viii} In original: “Last.”

^{ix} Kant, *The End of All Things*, 70-71.

yet if we would deduct what we owe to good luck, for example, absence of temptations,²⁷ or that we²⁸ have a good temper by nature for which we are in no way responsible, then things would look very different.

But the issue can be settled in favor of Dualism from the view that some people are destined for eternal misery and some for eternal bliss, because this is the only way in which we will be protected against self-complacency.²⁹ If we are sure nothing can happen to us, we won't take this eternity as seriously as we would if we regard the alternative as an open one.³⁰ So this is then settled.³¹ Now in this connection Kant already begins another reflection. On page 72 in your translation, line five from bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

Consequently the system of the Unitarian, as well as that of the Dualist, both considered as dogma, seem totally to exceed the speculative faculty of human reason, and everything seems to reduce us to restricting those rational Ideas simply to the conditions of practical use only.^x

LS: Now this practical . . . but badly translated. Those ideas of reason.³² This is an idea of reason, the end of all things, as we will see later. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

For we still see nothing ahead of us that could apprise us at the present time of our fate in a coming world except the judgment of our own conscience, that is, what our current moral state, so far as we are cognizant of it, permits us rationally to judge of the matter. That is to say, we must judge that those principles of our behavior in life which we have found governing in us (be they good or evil) until its end, will also continue to prevail after death, and we have not the slightest reason to assume an alteration of them in that future.^{xi}

LS: Now let us stop here. So there will be no change in our conduct after death.³³ The time in which we have the chance of influencing our eternal fate is time—I mean, as long as we live in time, not beyond that. So hence everything depends on our conduct in this life. We cannot correct our mistakes after death. We can only do it now. Good. Now let us turn to the next paragraph on the same page.

Mr. Reinken: “But why do people expect an end of the world at all?”^{xii}

LS: Yes. Now Kant turns now to a more fundamental consideration. He has now given us his judgment of what the right judgment on the end of all things is, but now he raises a more primary question: Why bring up this question at all? Is it in itself a necessary question? Yes?

^x Ibid., 72-73.

^{xi} Ibid., 73.

^{xii} Ibid.

Mr. Reinken:

And even if this is granted them, why precisely a terrifying end (which is the case for the majority of the human race)?^{xiii}

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Now, when Kant goes into this question,³⁴ he does not take up for one moment one possibility which seems so obvious. I am not speaking now, of course, of the thermonuclear bomb but of the old story, stemming from Greek philosophy, if not from the . . . namely, that³⁵ if the visible universe has come into being, as most people (with the exception of Aristotle in particular) assume, then from the point of view of reason alone, it would perish again. What has come into being would perish again. This consideration³⁶ doesn't play any role for Kant, as we have seen here. That is quite striking.

Ya, read on, please. Read on.

Mr. Reinken:

The basis for the first belief, that there would be an end at all, seems to be that reason tells them the duration of the world has a value only to the extent that rational creatures in it are commensurate with the ultimate purpose of its existence; but if this was not meant to be achieved, creation itself appears to be pointless to them, like a drama that is totally without issue and has no rational design. The second belief is based on the notion of the depraved nature of the human race, which is vast to the point of despair, a race for which the preparation of an end—and, indeed, a frightful end—is the only measure proper to the highest wisdom and justice (in the opinion of the greatest number of people).^{xiv}

LS: Ya, good. This—in other words, you see no consideration of a physical or physiological kind in Kant. In that long footnote, Kant gives some examples of how men consider human life, and I have to praise Mr. Dibbs that he opposed freedom of speech by not quoting the whole. [Laughter] I think that that is a more liberal procedure than what some people now regard as the most liberal procedure.

Now Kant in the sequel on page 74 bottom, answers the question: Why an end with terrors? The question which he has not answered. Now what is that? Will you read that?

Mr. Reinken:

In point of fact, men, not without reason, feel the burden of their existence even though they themselves are the cause of it. The reason for this seems to me to lie in the fact that in the progress of the human race the cultivation of talents, art, and taste (with their consequence, luxury) naturally precedes the development of morality; and this situation is precisely the most burdensome and hazardous for morality, as for physical well-being, because needs increase much more vigorously than the means to satisfy them. But the moral predisposition of mankind which (like

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid., 73-74.

Horace's "vengeance comes in limping feet")^{xv} always hobbles behind the cultivation of talents will someday overtake it (as one, under a wise world ruler, may well hope), though often stumbling and entangled as it is in its own hasty career. And so considering the empirical proofs for the superiority of morality in our age over all former ages, people themselves perhaps should be able to nourish the hope that the Latest^{xvi} Day might rather make its appearance with an Elijah's ascension and bring about the end of all things on earth, than with a descent into hell akin to that of Korah's band. But this heroic faith in virtue seems, after all, not to have so universally vigorous an influence on the conversion of souls as a revelatory scene attended by terrors which is thought of as preceding the last things.^{xvii}

LS: Ya. So you see now that this problem which Kant states here about the disproportion of man's moral development and his technical development, scientific, artistic development, this Kant had spoken of before in the writings we have discussed.³⁷ From where does Kant know this problem immediately?

Student: Rousseau.

LS: Rousseau, sure. And Kant,³⁸ as we have already seen in *Theory and Practice*, takes Rousseau to have found a solution to this difficulty in his *Emile* and *Social Contract*—a harmonistic solution, as we can say. And this harmonistic solution is the one which he accepts. He calls it the heroic belief in a great future, in converse to the unheroic belief in a terrible end, in a doomsday. I mean, in the present parlance: the optimist versus the pessimist. And Kant takes firmly the side of the optimist, not because he is³⁹ of a sanguine temper, but because he regards it his moral duty to be an optimist. And the pessimists are the ones who have a moral failing because they disregard their duty. Yes? What did you want to say Mr. . . . ?

Student: Since there are empirical proofs for the superiority of morality in our age over all former ages, why is this belief so heroic?

LS: Because the empirical proof is not good enough, because it could very well be that we have now in the age of Frederick the Great, the abolition of torture,⁴⁰ a milder punishment. A milder punishment,⁴¹ you know, in various respects. And of course what has happened in the French Revolution—that this was written after the outbreak of the French Revolution—these are hopeful signs. But a pessimist could say: Wait for the next turn of fate.⁴² And therefore, these empirical proofs are only⁴³ mildly right corroborations of the *true* face which has a moral origin. We will speak of that later. This is all . . .

To repeat, that is a heroic belief, namely, it is a belief in a way, a hope against hope.⁴⁴ Otherwise it would be a shallow optimism which has no value.⁴⁵ I mean, the case seems

^{xv} In original: "*poena, pede, claudo.*"

^{xvi} In original: "Last."

^{xvii} Ibid., 74.

to be stacked *against* the hope because we see always so much bestiality and vice and so on and so on, and yet we are morally obliged to hope.

Now once we have reached this point (perhaps already earlier⁴⁶ if one is more quick with it than I am, at least),⁴⁷ we note one thing. The essay began with a question regarding the death of the individual, or the fate of the individual after death. And now we have come to the question of an end of history, or the question of the fate of the human race. This shift has taken place insensibly. That doesn't mean that Kant was not aware of it while writing this piece, but surely he doesn't stress this change, this shift.

Now let us then turn to⁴⁸ that note at the beginning⁴⁹ of page 75 bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

We are dealing (or playing) here simply with Ideas which reason itself creates, the objects of which (if it possesses any) lie completely beyond our field of vision.^{xviii}

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here.⁵⁰ So Kant⁵¹ deals here with ideas in the Kantian sense, namely, with ideas which reason itself creates or which are products of our own reason, as he says somewhat later. But Kant says it is not quite serious. We are playing with these things, and he leaves it open here whether these ideas have any objects. It is not quite serious. Does this remind you of another writing of Kant where he also was⁵² explicitly playing?

Mr. Reinken: Last week's . . . the beginning of the Bible, Genesis 2 to 6. *The Conjectural Beginning*—

LS: Yes. *The Conjectural Beginning of the Human Race*,⁵³ which deals with the beginning of the Bible while omitting the first chapter of Genesis as irrelevant, but otherwise the beginning of the Bible. And here we have the end of the Bible in this, Revelation, with which he deals here. So⁵⁴ this work is a counterpart to *The Conjectural Beginnings*, and must therefore be also read in the way in which we have learned to read *The Conjectural Beginnings*. Kant is trying to find reason where there is not necessarily reason in the first place.⁵⁵ What did Lessing say of Leibniz? That he tried to get sparks from a flint. From a flint: Don't you call that stone a flint?

Mr. Reinken: Flint and, yeah, with a steel.

LS: Yes, meaning⁵⁶ [that] there may be in these old, what they now would call mythical, utterances, there may be some ideas of reason involved. And Kant gives⁵⁷ these texts the benefit of the doubt and he finds something in them. But he is in no way compelled to *believe* in the sacredness of these texts, that's obvious. So in this sense it is a playing, what he does. Yes.

And I repeat the expression we have here. The notion of an end of all things is a product of our own reason, an idea of our reason, i.e., we do not know anything of that by virtue

^{xviii} Ibid., 75.

of revelation, because whatever revelation may contain, it could never be *intelligible* to us if we did not spontaneously produce that idea which then would make intelligible an otherwise unintelligible utterance of a sacred text. Is this clear? There cannot be any revelation strictly speaking which tells man something what his own reason cannot tell him. Good. And now let us turn to the second paragraph on page 76.

Mr. Reinken:

Accordingly, the whole will be divided and presented in three sections: (1) in the *natural* end of all things conforming to the order of moral ends of divine wisdom which we can, therefore, certainly comprehend (in a practical sense)—^{xix}

LS: Not “certainly,” “well comprehend.” The German *wohl* has a . . . which we can well comprehend (in a practical intent), i.e. we could never comprehend it as a theoretical proposition.⁵⁸ Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

(2) in its *mystical* (supernatural) end in the order of efficient causes of which we comprehend nothing—^{xx}

LS: “Comprehend nothing” was underlined by Kant, to make it quite clear. And the first “understand well” was also underlined. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

(3) in the *unnatural* (perverted) end of all things for which we ourselves are responsible in that we *misunderstand* the ultimate purpose. The first of these possibilities has just been discussed and now the two remaining ones will follow.^{xxi}

LS: Ya. So in other words, the natural end of all things is the end corresponding to the heroic belief in a good end, i.e. the natural end of things is that which the philosophy of history has in mind. And this has been cleared up sufficiently for the present purpose, and now we have to consider only the alternatives: the mystical and the counter-natural or unnatural view. Yes.

Now Kant speaks then first of the supernatural end or the mystical end of all things, and let us read the next section.

Mr. Reinken:

In the Apocalypse,^{xxii} “An angel lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth forever and ever, who created haven, etc.: that there should be time no longer.” If one does not assume that this angel “with his voice of seven

^{xix} Ibid., 76.

^{xx} Ibid.

^{xxi} Ibid.

^{xxii} In original: “[i.e. Revelations 10:5, 6]”

thunders”⁵⁹ desired to cry out nonsense, then he must have meant with these words—^{xxiii}

LS: You see, he “*must* have meant,” ya? Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

that henceforth there should be no *change*; for if there were still change in the world, time, too, would be there, because change can only take place in time and is completely unthinkable without the presupposition of time. Here now is represented an end of all things as objects of the senses whereof we can formulate absolutely no concept, because inevitably we entangle ourselves in contradictions if we choose to take one single step out of the sensible world into the intelligible. This happens through the fact that the moment which determines the end of the sensible world is also supposed to be the beginning of the intelligible world; therefore, the latter is brought into one and the same temporal series with the former, and this is self-contradictory.^{xxiv}

LS: So the key point: if no time, then no change. But this⁶⁰ seems to be a matter of course. We will come across the difficulty very soon. Kant draws a further conclusion in the following paragraph. If no time, something else. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

But we also say that we conceive a duration as infinite (as eternity), not because we have any ascertainable concept at all of its enormity, for that is impossible since eternity lacks time altogether as a measure of itself; but rather, that concept is a purely negative one of the eternal duration, because where there is no time, also *no end* is possible. By means of this concept we do not proceed a single step further in our knowledge, but will have only declared that reason, in a practical sense, can never reach an ultimate purpose on the path of perpetual changes. And, too, if reason attempts it by employing the principle of rest and immutability of the condition of the world-creatures, it would not only be just as unsatisfactory with regard to its theoretical use but, rather, would end in total thoughtlessness. In these circumstances then nothing else remains for reason except to visualize a variation that progresses into the infinite (in time)—^{xxv}

LS: Ya, “a change,” let us . . . the same translation . . . make it quite clear. A change, ya.

Mr. Reinken: a change

that progresses into the infinite (in time) within the perpetual progression toward the ultimate purpose in connection with which its *disposition*

^{xxiii} Ibid., 76-77.

^{xxiv} Ibid., 77.

^{xxv} Ibid.

endures and is itself constant, a disposition which is not mutable like that progression of a phenomenon, but is rather something supersensible and is, consequently, not changing^{xxvi} in time. The rule for the practical use of reason according to this Idea, therefore, intends to express nothing more than that we must take our maxims as if, in all its changes from good to better which proceed into the infinite, our moral state, with respect to its disposition (the *homo noumenon*, “whose change takes place in heaven”) would not be subjected at all to temporal change.^{xxvii}

LS: Ya, here we have another case where I’m embarrassed by the fact that I do not know a proper translation for the German word *Gesinnung*, which he translates by “disposition.” The least one would have to do is to add “moral” disposition, but that is perhaps too weak. The “intention” might be a better translation. Max Weber made a distinction between two kinds of morality: a morality of responsibility, and morality of *Gesinnung*. I believe in that case the English translators say “intention,” ya? Don’t they? You must have read Max Weber when you went to college here at the University of Chicago. So moral intention; so let us say then “intention.”⁶¹

Now⁶² Kant has⁶³ said first: “if no time, no change.” And then he said: “if no time, no end,” which is a particularly striking kind of change, an end. But⁶⁴ for⁶⁵ practical intent, there is an infinite, constant change after that. Infinite progress, a change for the better, without change of the intention. That is to say I—assuming that I am a man of good intention, this good intention never changes, and to that extent I am trans-temporal. But since I *progressed* from an inferior state to an higher state, I do undergo a change. Now, how to figure this difficulty out is very, very hard. And surely one can understand from this point of view, since this is so complicated, that Kant should have been inclined in favor of the frankly temporalistic philosophy of history where this difficulty doesn’t arise (because all is change in time), rather than the doctrine of the immortality of the soul where he is saddled with the question how to understand a change, a progress, a temporal process, yet which is not to be a temporal process.

Now I think that at this point it is indispensable for us to read Kant’s official statement on the immortality of the soul in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Do you have that, does he have the page of the *Akademie* edition?⁶⁶ Page 122.

Mr. Reinken:

IV. The Immortality of the Soul as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason.

The achievement of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. In such a will, however, the complete fitness of intentions to the moral law is the supreme condition of the highest good. This fitness, therefore, must be just as possible as its object, because it is contained in the command that requires us to promote the latter. But the complete fitness of the will to the moral law is holiness,

^{xxvi} In original: “fluctuating.”

^{xxvii} Ibid., 77-78.

which is a perfection of which no rational being in the world of sense is at any time capable. But since it is required as practically necessary, it can be found only in an endless progress to that complete fitness; on principles of pure practical reason, it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object of our will.^{xxviii}

LS: Is this thought clear? We cannot possibly be holy as God is holy in finite time. But we can have a maximum approximation to holiness in infinite time, and that means after death because our earthly time is surely finite. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This infinite progress is possible, however, only under the presupposition of an infinitely enduring existence and personality of the same rational being; this is called the immortality of the soul. Thus the highest good is practically possible only on the supposition of the immortality of the soul, and the latter, as inseparably bound to the moral law, is a postulate of pure practical reason. By postulate of pure practical reason, I understand a theoretical proposition which is not as such demonstrable, but which is an inseparable corollary of an a priori unconditionally valid practical law.

The thesis of the moral destiny of our nature, viz., that it is able only in an infinite progress toward complete fitness to the moral law, is of great use, not merely for the present purpose of supplementing the impotence of speculative reason, but also with respect to religion.^{xxix}

LS: Now let us stop here. But the point is here that the postulate of pure practical reason regarding the immortality of the soul⁶⁷ has to do with an infinite progress after this life. That is to say, an infinite *change* and hence a *temporal* phenomenon in a fundamentally transtemporal existence. This difficulty⁶⁸ would be resolved, of course, by the abandonment of the immortality of the soul and by finding the substitute for it (for the immortality of the soul) in the philosophy of history. I think this thought has, in terms of votes, won out after Kant, up to our own . . . Would you not admit this, that in terms of sheer voting power it has won out?

Student: I don't take polls.

LS: No, but still—nor do I.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: But we proceed in a wholly unscientific manner now, I am aware of that. But still we are not forbidden to use our heads. [Laughter] Would you not agree?

Same Student: Yes. I would.

^{xxviii} Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 126-127.

^{xxix} Ibid., 127.

LS: That's true.⁶⁹ But all these changes which sociologists can establish in a way⁷⁰ which seems to kill any doubt. You have read the discussion of the death of God, which is also such a statistical problem.

Same Student: Then you can say that it's true of theology.

LS: Of theology? Ya, sure. Well, I observed this a generation ago in the German universities, which always had one faculty called the theological faculty, be it Protestant or Catholic, that depended upon the part of the country. But then new universities were found[ed] right at the end of the Second World War and after it. They had no longer a theological faculty, but⁷¹ they brought in a social science faculty. [Students chuckle] Ya? But this⁷² was also one of the signs of the time.

Now⁷³ of course these sociological observations⁷⁴ must be made, no doubt, but they cannot be understood if one does not go into the theoretical reasons, into the theoretical justifications, perhaps into the ideological justifications of these changes. And here when we study Kant we see, here especially [in] this writing, we see one of these reasons. Kant, still very much concerned with the postulate of the immortality of the soul, is unable to give any proper account of this temporal/trans-temporal character of life after death, a difficulty which, to repeat, disappears if you vote in favor of philosophy of history. And it doesn't make any difference whether the Kantian or the Hegelian or any other, because here we⁷⁵ never leave the temporal sphere.

Let us turn to the next paragraph [in *The End of All Things*] where Kant makes this point still more clear.⁷⁶

Mr. Reinken:

But that some time a moment will make its appearance when all change—and with it time itself—will cease is a notion that revolts our imagination. Then, of course, the whole of nature, as it were, will grow rigid and petrified; then the final thought, the last feeling will remain stationary in the thinking subject and ever the same without variation. For a creature which can be conscious of its existence and the magnitude of it (viewed as a duration) in time only, such a life, if, indeed, it may be called life, must seem equivalent to annihilation, because in order to fancy itself in such a situation, the creature must really still contemplate something; but contemplation comprehends a process of reflection—^{xxx}

LS: “Of thinking” . . . connotation.⁷⁷ “Thinking contains reflection—”

Mr. Reinken: Oh. But thinking contains “a process of reflection which itself can only occur in time.”^{xxx}

^{xxx} Kant, *The End of All Things*, 78.

^{xxx} Ibid.

LS: In other words, God would not strictly speaking think or, as Kant puts it, God's understanding is intuitive understanding, not implying reflection, not⁷⁸ discourse. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Hence the inhabitants of the other world, according to their dwelling place (heaven or hell), are presented as singing forever and ever the same song, either their hallelujah, or eternally doleful notes;^{xxxii} in this way the total absence of all change is meant to be indicated in their state.^{xxxiii}

LS: In other words, singing is of course a temporal process.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, you can symbolically present non-change by saying, "singing, but⁸⁰ singing always the same." That's the point. But you must of course take this as symbolic and must not take it literally. The cessation of all change (that is the point which Kant makes here) is wholly unintelligible to us, and yet in a way we have to assert it on practical grounds. And now the difficulty. Up to now there is no great difficulty⁸¹ to which Kant points. Now there is one to which he himself points in the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

However much this Idea transcends our cognitive capacity, it is still closely akin to reason in a practical respect. If we accept the moral-physical condition of man here in life even on the best terms, that is to say, of a perpetual progression and advance to the highest good which is marked out as his destination, he still cannot (even in the consciousness of the immutability of his intention^{xxxiv}) unite contentment with the prospect of his condition (moral as well as physical) enduring in an eternal state of change. For the condition in which man now exists remains ever an evil, in comparison to the better condition into which he stands ready to proceed; and the notion of an infinite progression to the ultimate purpose is still simultaneously one prospect in an unending series of evils which, if they are truly outweighed by the greater good, yet do not permit contentment to prevail—a contentment which he can think only by thinking that the ultimate purpose will some time finally be reached.^{xxxv}

LS: So in other words, a devastating criticism of the notion of progress: Hegel's criticism of Kant later. To exemplify it by a simple example: perpetual peace, as we will hear next time, is an idea of reason, which means it is a goal of an infinite progress. Now, but if it is a goal of infinite progress, that means of course that perpetual peace will never be achieved actually—only in infinite time, which means never, i.e., that⁸² you can speak of perpetual peace⁸³ in the Kantian sense only if you are aware that you admit at the same time perpetual war. You know, there may be a little bit less of war next time, if you are willing to believe that, but there will always be war around. And perhaps it is possible to abolish war between nations, but surely not war within nations or within families or

^{xxxii} In original: [Rev.] 19:1-6; 20:15)"

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

^{xxxiv} In original: "disposition."

^{xxxv} Ibid., 78-79.

within the individual. So this, then, is the difficulty which Kant faces here,⁸⁴ but from which he does not draw the conclusion that hence there is something wrong with the idea of infinite progress, but that people give in and abandon the idea of progress unreasonably. That is what he says in the next paragraph. We have to read only the beginning.

Mr. Reinken:

Now as a result the speculative man becomes entangled in mysticism where his reason does not understand itself and what it wants, and rather prefers to dote on the beyond than to confine itself within the bounds of this world, as is fitting for an intellectual inhabitant of a sensible world.^{xxxvi}

LS: In other words, the way out which men take is mysticism, as Kant understands mysticism, and which means⁸⁵ the belief⁸⁶ that men can arrive at a final state—a final state, and not essentially infinite progress. And this is something like the nothingness of which Lao-Tzu^{xxxvii} speaks and other mystics, pantheists—and even Spinoza, as Kant seems to believe. So this is the mystical end of all things, which is irrational.

And now in the sequel Kant speaks of the third alternative which is the unnatural end of all things. And it is only in this section that Christianity becomes the theme.⁸⁷ There is Christian mysticism, but Kant speaks here not of Christian mysticism but of Far Eastern mysticism or Indian mysticism.⁸⁸ Now what is here the point regarding the unnatural end of all things? Kant starts with the observation regarding the questionable character of human wisdom, especially in men's attempts to make religion in a whole people pure and at the same time powerful. Now this is a temptation, as it were, which men may have: to have religion pure and at the same time in a whole people, and at the same time powerful. Yes. Now let us continue here, page 80, second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Nevertheless, if, for once, these trials have finally succeeded so greatly that the commonwealth is willing and able to give ear, not merely to conventional doctrines of devotion, but also to practical reason which is illuminated by them (even as it is absolutely necessary to religion); if (in a human way) the sages among the people, rather than coming to an agreement among themselves (like a clergy), as fellow citizens draw up plans and agree upon them for the most part, this demonstrates in a trustworthy way that truth is of concern to them. And the nation, too, takes an interest in it on the whole (although not yet in the subtlest detail) owing to the generally sensed necessity—not based on authority—for the indispensable cultivation of its moral character.^{xxxviii} Thus nothing seems to be more advisable than to leave the sages alone to make and pursue their course since, for once, they are making satisfactory progress with

^{xxxvi} Ibid., 79.

^{xxxvii} Lao-Tzu (or Laozi) was, according to Han dynasty tradition, a sixth century B.C.E. Chinese philosopher or mystic, the founder of Daoism and author of the *Tao-te ching*.

^{xxxviii} In original: “[Anlage].” Brackets in original.

respect to the *idea* to which they are attending; and to leave to Providence the outcome of the means selected toward the best ultimate purpose, since it remains always uncertain what the issue may be according to the course of nature. For we—^{xxxix}

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. So Kant takes now up a question: men's attempt to make religion in a whole people pure and at the same time powerful, and he observes that in this respect a great change has taken place in our time, meaning in the eighteenth century. Religion is now illuminated by practical reason more than it ever was. And these people who have no official standing, they are not clergymen, they are these private men of whom he spoke, scholars⁸⁹—one must not say intellectuals when speaking of a Kantian thought. So in other words, we are here confronted now with what Kant had spoken before in different words but he meant the same thing, namely, the natural end of all things, the progress to the greatest possible betterment, the beginning of a conscious movement toward what this heroic belief in a good end has in mind. And now we come to a crucial point in the immediate sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

For we may be as incredulous as we wish, yet where it is absolutely impossible to see in advance with certainty the success that results from positive means which are accepted according to all human wisdom (which, if it deserves its name, must move solely toward morality), we must still give credence to a concurrence of divine wisdom with the course of nature in a practical sense, if we do not prefer to relinquish our ultimate purpose altogether.^{xl}

LS: So now, here that is the key statement in this essay about the moral basis of the philosophy of history, of a belief in the *meaningfulness* of history, that is to say, a belief that history is a movement from the inferior to the superior. To the superior: from the bad to the good.⁹⁰ We are morally obliged to work for that progress. We cannot do that with the necessary conviction if we do not believe that this progress is supported⁹¹ by providence. And to that extent, the philosophy of history is itself demanded by morality. Not only our outlook to the future, our hopes for the future, but the systematic presentation of that outlook in a philosophy of history is itself a moral duty. Yes. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

To be sure, people will object. Often it has been said that the present plan is the best; it is the one according to which things must endure for now and ever more; now it is a condition for eternity. "Whoever (according to this concept) is good, is always good, and whoever (contrary to it) is evil, is always evil":^{xli} exactly as if eternity, and with it, the end of all things could already be entered now. And yet, since that time, continually new

^{xxxix} Ibid., 80-81.

^{xl} Ibid., 81.

^{xli} In original: "(Rev. 22:11)"

schemes have been introduced, among which the newest was often only the revival of an old one;—^{xlii}

LS: This is the old-fashioned view:⁹² there is no progress, but men make always plans which are well-intentioned and which may be⁹³ useful up to a point, but they will not radically change the human condition. And this is here based, this . . . is based on a verse from the Revelation. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken:

and henceforward also there will be no lack of more final projects.

I am so very conscious of my inability to make a new and successful attempt in this, lacking as I do any great inventive faculty for it, that I prefer to counsel people to leave matters just as they last stood and as they had, throughout almost a generation, proved bearable in their consequences.^{xliii}

LS: Ya. Now let us stop here for one moment. So in other words, people make objections to the present plan, to the plan of an *enlightened* Christianity, a Christianity illuminated by pure practical reason. And this plan, says Kant, has proved to be bearable (which is an understatement from his point of view) for almost a generation. What the dates are which he has here in mind is hard to say. He may be a little bit evasive because he may mean the period of Frederick the Great with his great tolerance as distinguished from the intolerant policy of Frederick's successor, Frederick II. That is possible. Yes.

And now Kant becomes a little bit more explicit in the sequel, and I will state this as follows: Kant begins here to speak in the next paragraph of the amiability or lovability of Christianity. So the question ⁹⁴obviously in this Third Part concerns Christianity, the lovability of Christianity. And Kant makes here seemingly a very shocking concession from the point of view of his moral philosophy. You remember what he said about the categorical imperative and⁹⁵ the only proper human response to it: respect for the law. *Achtung für das Gesetz*. And now Kant says here:

this respect for the moral law, of which I have praised so highly in the moral writings proper, is not enough. We need, also, a presentation of what we ought to do which is *lovable*, not merely respect-demanding. And that lovable presentation is Christianity.

But—and now⁹⁶ the cloven hoof comes out in the following manner: this amiability is incompatible with authority, i.e., if Christianity presents itself as based on authority or as *being* authoritative, then it ceases to be lovable. There cannot be a command to love Christianity or to love Jesus Christ, because then it ceases to be amiable at once. The founder of Christianity is not a lawgiver, a commander, but a philanthropist, a friend of human beings who does not claim any authority. And in particular, he does not threaten men with punishment, because that would immediately soil the pure motivation of the

^{xlii} Ibid.

^{xliii} Ibid.

moral will—because it would be consideration of fear of punishment and not respect for the law which would induce men to act properly. And of course the same is true of rewards. The rewards promised by Christianity cannot be understood as rewards inducing men to act morally because otherwise we would act immorally by acting well with the thought of rewards.

Let us turn to page 84, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: “That is the moral worthiness of love which Christianity carries—”^{xliv}

LS: Ya, more “worthiness of love?” Ya, “amiability” or “lovability” would be better there.

Mr. Reinken:⁹⁷

That is the moral lovableness^{xlv} which Christianity carries within itself, which still glimmers through the many constraints appended to it—^{xlvi}

LS: “Coercion.” Coercion.

Mr. Reinken:

coercions applied^{xlvii} to it with the very frequent change of opinions. It has preserved Christianity itself in the face of the aversion which it otherwise would have encountered, and (what is remarkable) this lovability^{xlviii} shows itself in a light only so much the brighter at the time of the greatest enlightenment which ever was among men.

Should Christianity—^{xlix}

LS: Yes. No, no, let us stop here a moment. Which is that “time of the greatest enlightenment that ever was among human beings?”

Student: About 1784.

LS: Yes, sure, or '94 for that matter. So the lovability of Christianity appears most clearly in our most enlightened age, i.e., the highest triumph of Christianity at a time when Christianity is most completely divorced, apart from its early spirit, from any authority. That's the point. So the victory of Christianity goes . . . with its abandoning any claim to authority.⁹⁸ Kant uses here the word a little bit later, “this *liberal* way of thinking.” Of course “liberal” does not mean in Kant what it means today in this country, especially where it can go together with the greatest license I believe imaginable. Kant, as we know,

^{xliv} Ibid., 84.

^{xlv} In original: “moral worthiness of love”

^{xlvi} Ibid.

^{xlvii} In original: “constraints appended”

^{xlviii} In original: “worthiness”

^{xlix} Ibid.

thought very highly of the moral law.⁹⁹ He defines¹⁰⁰ [liberal] equally remote from servile mentality and from license. But the key point is: no authority.

And now let us not forget what you may have forgotten, what is the perverse or counter-natural possibility which Kant is discussing here in the last few pages that we find alluded to in the last paragraph? Ya.¹⁰¹

Mr. Reinken:

Should Christianity once reach the point where it ceases to be lovable¹ (which might well happen if it were armed with dictatorial authority instead of its gentle spirit), then a natural antipathy and insubordination toward it would be bound to become the predominant mode of men's thinking, since no neutrality prevails in matters of morality (still less a coalition of conflicting principles). And the Antichrist, who is considered to be the harbinger of Doomsday, would take up his reign (presumably founded on fear and selfishness). Then, however, Christianity, though indeed intended to be the universal world religion, would not be favored by the workings of fate to become so, and the (perverse) end of all things (in a moral point of view) would come to pass.^{li}

LS: Ya. So in other words, it seems at first glance [that] if Christianity should cease to be lovable—and this would be the consequence because it would appear to be armed with authority—this would be the perverse end. This would be the Antichrist, the perversion of Christianity, and the unnatural end of all things.¹⁰²

The age of the Antichrist, as Kant says, will last only [a] very short [time], so this will not be a perverse end. It won't be the end. Or should it be the end? No, I think what Kant alludes to in a very restrained language is a possibility of the perversion of Christianity at the end of history, so that the age of the Antichrist might be short, meaning the world comes to an end but the end would then be an anti-Christian end. And that is the third alternative discussed by Kant. I think we must not take this writing too seriously in what it asserts, because Kant plays here with ideas of reason, as he says, but only because of the truly Kantian implications: what he indicates about the heroic belief in the good end as a moral duty and matters related to that.

Only if Christianity complies with the demands of morality¹⁰³ or moral reason as Kant has set them forth, i.e., with the demand for *self-legislation*, autonomy, and not heteronomy; subject then to a law which does not originate in your own reason, say, only in divine reason. This is a radical change in Christianity which Kant must demand¹⁰⁴ under these conditions, a Christianity within the limits of pure reason. Kant is willing to call himself a Christian, but only under these conditions.

¹ In original: "worthy of love"

^{li} Ibid.

So next time we will come to¹⁰⁵ subjects more immediately recognizable as subjects of a political science seminar, when we turn to Kant's writing on *Perpetual Peace*. Or as one could almost say, on United Nations—quite close.

¹ Deleted "if...."

² Deleted "what...."

³ Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Same Student:** You're talking about the breakdown of morality?"

⁴ Deleted "The end...."

⁵ Deleted "with the end of all things...."

⁶ Deleted "Well, it has to do with the...."

⁷ Deleted "he...."

⁸ Deleted "but...without going into...."

⁹ Deleted "as...as...as...."

¹⁰ Deleted "Now it is a...."

¹¹ Deleted "And Lessing...."

¹² Deleted "to say."

¹³ Deleted "in what...."

¹⁴ Deleted "if you...."

¹⁵ Deleted "he describes...he...."

¹⁶ Deleted "his story with...."

¹⁷ Deleted "is...."

¹⁸ Deleted "of...."

¹⁹ Deleted "in the...."

²⁰ Deleted "about...."

²¹ Deleted "let us then turn to...."

²² Deleted "seems also...."

²³ Deleted "of the end...of...."

²⁴ Deleted "he...though."

²⁵ Deleted "what...."

²⁶ Deleted "very...."

²⁷ Deleted "and...."

²⁸ Deleted "are...."

²⁹ Deleted "We cannot...."

³⁰ Deleted "Let us then...this...."

³¹ Deleted "And now Kant turns to another...."

³² Deleted "The...."

³³ Deleted "This...there is no...."

³⁴ Deleted "he does not raise...."

³⁵ Deleted "since the visible...."

³⁶ Deleted "is completely...."

³⁷ Deleted "I mean...where...."

³⁸ Deleted "as he had already...."

³⁹ Deleted "such a...."

⁴⁰ Deleted "a more...."

⁴¹ Deleted "of...of."

⁴² Deleted "And then...."

⁴³ Deleted "of...."

⁴⁴ Deleted "That...."

⁴⁵ Deleted "It is...."

⁴⁶ Deleted "if what we are...."

⁴⁷ Deleted "we have note...."

⁴⁸ Deleted "the beginning of the next...of...of."

⁴⁹ Deleted "of the next...."

⁵⁰ Deleted "Now this...."

⁵¹ Deleted "we...."

-
- 52 Deleted "playing...."
- 53 Deleted "In other words...."
- 54 Deleted "this is a counterpart...."
- 55 Deleted "How did this...how did Lessing...."
- 56 Deleted "in...."
- 57 Deleted "them the benefit...."
- 58 Ak 8:333 line 9.
- 59 Reinken omits "(v. 3)."
- 60 Deleted "has, that is...."
- 61 Deleted "So in...."
- 62 Deleted "the point which."
- 63 Deleted "made...."
- 64 Deleted "from...with it...."
- 65 Deleted "practical purposes...."
- 66 Deleted "**Student:** Yes, I think he does."
- 67 Deleted "is...."
- 68 Deleted "would be one reason...."
- 69 Deleted "And here...I mean...."
- 70 Deleted "which seems to baffle...."
- 71 Deleted "in...."
- 72 Deleted "is also...."
- 73 Deleted "but these points are...."
- 74 Deleted "are...."
- 75 Deleted "have...are...."
- 76 Deleted "**Reinken:** 'Only endless progress from lower to higher stages of moral perfection is possible to a rational, but finite being.' **LS:** No, no. I am sorry. I meant in the— **Reinken:** Oh, yeah. **LS:** we cannot read the rest, I'm sorry. I'm sorry."
- 77 Deleted "should not be...."
- 78 Deleted "discursive."
- 79 Deleted "But if you try...."
- 80 Deleted "always...."
- 81 Deleted "which...."
- 82 Deleted "there will be...."
- 83 Deleted "when...."
- 84 Deleted "and...."
- 85 Deleted "to believe...."
- 86 Deleted "to have a right...."
- 87 Deleted "in the...."
- 88 Deleted "And, good.."
- 89 Deleted "in...."
- 90 Deleted "We cannot...."
- 91 Deleted "by providential...."
- 92 Deleted "there will be no...."
- 93 Deleted "or have...."
- 94 Deleted "is."
- 95 Deleted "the...the human...."
- 96 Deleted "we come...here comes...."
- 97 Deleted "But...."
- 98 Deleted "And therefore it is...."
- 99 Deleted "But still, this "liberal" means here, surely...."
- 100 Deleted "it."
- 101 Deleted "**Reinken:** Read it? **LS:** Yeah."
- 102 Deleted "But the last sentences are...."
- 103 Deleted "as...."
- 104 Deleted "and within...."

¹⁰⁵ Deleted “more....”

Session 14: May 18, 1967

Leo Strauss: Now only a few points.ⁱ Regarding the title, you translated it *Zum ewigen Frieden* in German, “Toward Eternal Peace.” This is possible, but it is not the most natural understanding of “*zum*.” Now for example, if someone were to write an article on Kant’s troubles with the Prussian censor, ya, and would not mean¹ to exhaust the subject but has discovered a new piece of evidence which throws light, or something of this kind, then he would very well say in German “Zu Kants Kontroverse mit einem Zensur.”

Student: And the censor concerning—

LS: Ya, concerning, or in reference to.

Mr. Reinken: Footnote to be attached to.

LS: Ya, or in reference to, or as some French people say, *en marge*.² But this is a trivial point.

The most serious point you made was that these imperatives here are hypothetical. But you mention at least one case where the basis of Kant’s formulation is the dignity of man, which is surely categoric and not hypothetic. And so we will take this up and³ we will then see whether there is any reason. You may have mistaken the fact that Kant cannot present these articles of perpetual peace for the preliminary and the definitive ones as categorically valid now. Because, I mean, what can the citizens do? Nothing. And even the governments may have quite good reasons, in some cases at any rate, to say: We cannot stop that in an entirely hostile world. You know? That you may have mistaken for hypothetical. Good.

Now then you refer to the alternative policy which Kant discusses, namely, aggrandizement . . . And you spoke of this connection of power, the motivation being what, of these men? I mean, say, an intelligent, old-fashioned—or for that matter, present day—statesman. What would he say against Kant’s point, in terms of power?

Mr. Fisher: The only argument I can think of is that we seek power solely⁴ to be able to exercise it for the benefit of the citizens.

LS: Yes.⁵ He surely would speak in this way today: that we can’t help it, we have to be on our guard and we don’t know what our potential enemies plan. And so we might be compelled to take some preventive action sometimes.

But⁶ that is not quite the point which Kant meant. Kant uses a somewhat different term, and this throws light on our present way of thinking and speaking. He speaks of “glory,” doesn’t he? So in other words, according to this view the glory of a state consists in expanding and in subjugating neighbors . . . But here there is⁷ not the excuse of “we can’t help it,” but it is glorious in itself. That’s something very different. And may I say in

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student’s paper, the reading of which was not recorded.

general that the present-day use of power, where power is used in such an innocent way, “we can’t help it,” is a relatively recent thing. The older view was rather a very positive one, and so not power, but glory. When people—for example, when Thucydides speaks of these kind of problems, he calls this view, which now would be called power, a concern with security. You know? You want to be secure. Or fear, as he honestly calls it. That is one thing. But⁸ the motive of, say, of Athens, of imperial Athens is of course not mere fear. It might have been at the beginning when they started on their imperialistic policy, but the main motives are profit and glory. Glory.

And there is something to that. The peculiar hypocrisy of modern times shows itself in the forgetting about glory as a motive of societies, and pushing them back and to that innocent thing, power. Power is or sounds innocent because whether you are concerned with moral or non-moral purposes, in both cases you need power. So therefore this is a neutral means which can be used for good and for bad ends. And therefore, if we forget about the ends, then we have this⁹ neutral concept of power which is so frequently used today. I have heard more than once, “power is the subject of political science,” period, just as wealth is the subject of economics. There are so many that it is a very complicated thing. Power may mean authority—political, legal authority—which is not the same as this kind of power useful to us, and so on. So let us watch this term a bit.

The last point I want to make is this: Kant says that states are now in the state of nature, the state of war. And the state of war doesn’t mean that they are engaged always in actual hostilities. This is an older view, isn’t it? I mean, that is exactly what Hobbes means when he says all men are by nature in a state of war, which does not mean that they are actually engaged in warfare, but that there is no possibility of a legal, peaceful settlement of their conflict, because there is no one superior who can settle it. All right. These are the points I want to make now.

Now I would like to return to Mr. Randall’s paper. I have two points. Mr. Randall recognized the strange transition in the essay *The End of All Things*, namely, Kant¹⁰ begins to speak of the immortality of the individual soul. The bulk of the essay, however, deals with the end of all things considered from the eschatological or apocalyptic point of view. What happens to the soul between death and the general apocalypse is unclear. Yes.

And there was one other point on page 3. “The fate of the soul was never a speculative issue. It was always a practical principle which provided the necessary foundation for the moral law.” That’s wrong. The moral law has no foundation outside of itself. But it is derivative from the moral law. So otherwise, this was quite satisfactory.¹¹

In this¹² mildly ironical, charmingly ironical preface,¹³ Kant alludes (as has become clear from Mr. Meriwether’s report) to the issue of theory and practice. And he refers here to this satirical inscription on the shingles of a Dutch innkeeper to the eternal peace, and the picture was a graveyard.¹⁴

Now I happen to know, let me see, in Fontenelleⁱⁱ—Fontenelle, a great, famous popularizer of modern science in the seventeenth and eighteenth century—he wrote the eulogy of Leibniz in the Paris Academy. And there he mentions this fact: that Leibniz edited a book called *Codex of the Law of Nations*, and [he] takes it for granted, as Leibniz before him, that the nations have no other laws between them than those which [it] pleases them to make. And this is what Leibniz had put together, all the peace treaties on which he could lie his . . . hands. Leibniz confesses that so many peace treaties so frequently renewed among the same nations are a disgrace for these nations. And he approves with pain the inscription of a Dutch merchant, which he had subscribed “To Eternal Peace”¹⁵ and had around a picture of a cemetery. That seems to be the source for Kant’s remark. But this only in passing.

Now what is the key point of the joke which Kant makes with this introduction? That did not become quite clear from Mr. Meriwether’s statement. The super serious man of business looks down with contempt upon such things as Kant’s proposals regarding perpetual peace. And [Kant] says: Very well, if you despise that so much,¹⁶ if you regard this as irrelevant, hence harmless, then let me alone. That is the joke which Kant makes here.

Now let us come to the preliminary articles. Yes. Let us first read the first preliminary article and then—

Mr. Reinken:

*No Treaty of Peace Shall Be Esteemed Valid On Which Is Tacitly Reserved Matter for Future War.*ⁱⁱⁱ¹⁷

LS: Ya. Now¹⁸ I think that is clear, because once you do that you prepare already for the next war. And now¹⁹ in this statement here, on page 86 line 5.

Mr. Reinken:

When one or both parties to a treaty of peace, being too exhausted to continue warring with each other, make a tacit reservation^{iv} in regard to old claims to be elaborated only at some more favorable opportunity in the future, the treaty is made in bad faith, and we have an artifice worthy of the casuistry of a Jesuit. Considered by itself, it is beneath the dignity of a sovereign, just as the readiness to indulge in this kind of reasoning is unworthy of the dignity of his minister.^v

LS: So that is the reply of Kant to that minister who looks down on him: that this man who says, “I know better” has no sense of the dignity of his office.

Now, and²⁰ the next statement is, again, the second article?

ⁱⁱ Bernard Le Bouvier (or Bouyer) de Fontenelle (1657-1757), French author and member of the French Academy.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 85.

^{iv} In original: “(*reservatio mentalis*)”

^v *Ibid.*, 86.

Mr. Reinken:

Any State of Whatever Extent Shall Never Pass Under the Dominion of Another State, Whether by Inheritance, Exchange, Purchase or Donation.^{vi21}

LS: Yes. Now this was a very common thing in absolutist Germany especially, of course, but not only there. Think of the wars of succession—of the Spanish succession, of the Austrian succession—which could never have happened if this principle had been acknowledged. And²² here is where Kant says that what a state is²³ is not the soils of the state, but a society of human beings. And if they are purchased, given away, sold, or what have you, then human beings are treated as things and not as persons, and therefore that is an immoral thing. So this²⁴ is definitely a direct consequence of the categorical imperative. Yes. And now the next point.

Mr. Reinken: “*Standing Armies*^{vii} *Shall in Time Be Totally Abolished.*”^{viii}

LS: Ya. “Standing armies” means here mercenary armies, as appears from the sequel. Kant has nothing against citizen soldiers—on the contrary, that he recommends in this very section. Let us read only one point . . . half sentence here, “to which is,” in the middle of this statement. “To which is added—”

Mr. Reinken:

[That] to pay men to kill or to be killed seems to entail using them as mere machines and tools in the hand of another (the state), and this is hardly compatible with the rights of mankind in our own person.^{ix}

LS: Why he uses this mitigating expression? Expressions “hardly” and “seems”? It still shows, in other words, the connection. Yes. Now, and then the next point—no, that is²⁵ not revealing of fundamental principles, we can skip it. But it is clear insofar as public debts are frequently necessary for waging war, [that] making and carrying public debts for that purpose should be forbidden. The next point is politically much more interesting. Point number 5.

Mr. Reinken: “*No State Shall by Force Interfere with the Constitution or Government of Another State.*”^x

LS: Yes. Now let us read that further on.

Mr. Reinken:

For what is there to authorize it so to do^{xi}? The offense, perhaps, which a state gives to the subjects of another state? Rather the example of the evil

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} In original: “*miles perpetuus*”

^{viii} Ibid., 87.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Ibid., 89.

into which a state has fallen because of its lawlessness should serve as a warning. Moreover, the bad example which one free person affords another as a received scandal^{xii} is not an infringement of his rights. But it would be quite different if a state, by internal rebellion, should fall into two parts, each of which pretended to be a separate state making claim to the whole. To lend assistance to one of these cannot be considered an interference in the constitution of the other state (for it is then in a state of anarchy). But so long as the internal dissension has not come to this critical point, such interference—^{xiii}

LS: No,²⁶ “has not yet been decided,” Kant says.²⁷ Because “as long as this internal struggle has not yet been decided—”

Mr. Reinken:

as long as it has not been decided, such interference by foreign powers would infringe on the rights of an independent people struggling with its internal disease; hence it would itself be an offense and would render the autonomy of all states insecure.^{xiv}

LS: Yes. Now this question of the autonomy of all states which is the basic premise of the whole thing we will discuss later. And now here only one point. One thinks of the American Civil War, of which Kant could not know—you know, the attempts or the apparent attempts of the Palmerston^{xv} government to take the side of the Confederacy against the Washington government would be an example. Now according to your translation, the British, if they had this intention, which is not certain, would have acted correctly; but according to the German original they tried to interfere before the struggle was decided, and therefore that was not right.

Now this is a long, long question. The question of the right of interventions in the affairs of another state. Do you know something about the history of this concept? Well,²⁸ very generally speaking, the premodern view was [that] intervention is of course admitted. Think of a barbarous, bestial tyrant²⁹ who keeps down a city, and if the neighboring cities, not out of fear for their own security [but] just for reasons of humanity or justice, intervene, that is very good. That was generally speaking the classical, traditional view.

And the other view we can call the modern view. And it was of course connected with the modern notion of the autonomy of the states, modern notion of sovereignty, and to this extent, going back to men like Hobbes and Bodin.^{xvi} But the immediate origin was what happened³⁰ on this continent after the conquest by the Spaniards. This conquest was

^{xi} In original: “to do so.”

^{xii} In original: “*scandalum acceptum*.”

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865), Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1855-1858 and 1859-1865.

^{xvi} Jean Bodin (1530-1596), French jurist and political philosopher.

based, according to some official theory, on the right of Christians to conquer and Christianize pagans. And the Spaniards behaved—not all, of course, but the most powerful and vigorous men behaved in a rather bestial manner in Mexico and Peru. And then some Catholic writers started this line: that there is no right on the basis of natural right, nor on the basis of divine right, to Christianize nations by force. And this reasoning³¹—can you help me in remembering some of the names of some of these writers? Vitoria,^{xvii} I remember, and some others.

Student: Mariana.^{xviii}

LS: Mariana.³² Their works were edited in the *Carnegie Classics of International Law*. This was then integrated into doctrines of an entirely different origin, like the Bodin-Hobbes doctrine, which asserted the sovereignty of states, the autonomy of the states, rather radically.

There is a very interesting discussion of this subject in Grotius's book, of *The Right of War and Peace*, book 2, chapter 20 especially,³³ in which he presents, gives evidence of the older view which permitted intervention. And Grotius, if I remember well, leans toward this older view which permits wars of civilization, and which are rejected by the modern view. Yes. Now the next article.

Mr. Reinken:

No State Shall, during War, Permit Such Acts of Hostility Which Would Make Mutual Confidence in the Subsequent Peace Impossible: Such Are the Employment of Assassins,³⁴ Poisoners,³⁵ Breach of Capitulation, and Incitement to Treason³⁶ in the Opposing State.^{xix}

LS: "Etc., etc.," Kant says. So the list wasn't meant to be complete. Yes. Now read.

Mr. Reinken:

These are dishonorable stratagems. For some confidence in the character of the enemy must remain even in the midst of war, as otherwise no peace could be concluded and the hostilities would degenerate into a war of extermination.^{xx37} War, however, is only the sad recourse in the state of nature (where there is no tribunal which could judge with the force of law) by which each state asserts its right by violence and in which neither party can be adjudged unjust (for that would presuppose a juridical decision); in lieu of such a decision, the issue of the conflict (as if given by a so-called "judgment of God") decides on which side justice lies.^{xxi}

^{xvii} Francisco de Vitoria (c. 1486-1546), Spanish Roman Catholic theologian.

^{xviii} Juan de Mariana (1536-1624), Spanish Jesuit priest.

^{xix} Ibid.

^{xx} In original: "*bellum intern*"

^{xxi} Ibid., 89-90.

LS: Ya. Now here you see the difference between these Spanish Dominicans (I believe they were Dominicans; were they Dominicans?) and the Hobbean view, because the older view was, of course, that there³⁸ can be a just war. It can be³⁹ unjust on both sides, but there can also be justice on one side, whereas [in] the modern view, first classically stated by Hobbes, it is impossible to call any war just because only when there is an authority recognized by both sides can [one] consider the possibility of distinguishing between justice and injustice. And therefore there cannot be any punitive war. You know that this has been changed since the Nuremberg trials, to some extent already in the Versailles treaty. There was such a proposition: that one party to the conflict can declare the other party to be unjust. Today that seems to be accepted, and we have seen there was . . . tried in Stockholm. Yes. Now that's a long question. Now let us go on.

Mr. Reinken: "But between states no punitive war⁴⁰ is conceivable, because there is no relation between them of master and servant."^{xxii}

LS: No, no, "of a superior to the subject."

Mr. Reinken: of superior and subject.

LS: Ya. But they are only enemies and not superiors and subjects. Whenever there is punishment, there is a superior (say, the judge) acting for the government, for the commonwealth, confronted with subject, the defendant. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

It follows that a war of extermination, in which the destruction of both parties and of all justice can result, would permit perpetual peace only in the vast burial ground of the human race. Therefore, such a war and the use of all means leading to it must be absolutely forbidden. But that the means cited do inevitably lead to it is clear from the fact that these infernal arts, vile in themselves, when once used would not long be confined to the sphere of war. Take, for instance, the use of spies.⁴¹ In this, one employs the infamy of others (which can never be entirely eradicated) only to encourage its persistence even into the state of peace, to the undoing of the very spirit of peace.^{xxiii}

LS: Ya, and what about the use of spies? Is this to be counted among the "etc." in the title of this article?

Student: It would have to be.

Student: It doesn't come under any of the—

LS:⁴² In other words, ya, then indeed there would be . . . because in war you need spies, exploratories as they are called here, to find out whether the enemy is preparing offenses.

^{xxii} Ibid., 90.

^{xxiii} Ibid.

And now⁴³ they have to do all kinds of things. For example, they may look like peaceful inhabitants of the country on which they are spying. And the question is: Can you stop that at the end of the war? But Kant, I think, seems to exclude the use of spies, and this would then lead him into troubles from the point of view of conscientious generals, I believe. Ya? I mean of moral generals.

Now in the long discussion⁴⁴ at the end of this section Kant speaks of a question of natural law—that is to say, of moral law—and he makes clear the status of the preceding laws. Some are simply laws which forbid, *legis prohibitivae*, and I think they are only laws which forbid, and some are strict laws which demand immediate abolition, like number 6. And [there are] others⁴⁵ where it is legitimate to postpone⁴⁶ their being put into practice. So there is no question that these are moral laws for Kant.

It is only clear that a private citizen cannot do anything about it. And it is possible that⁴⁷ it cannot be morally condemned in all cases, given the present state of affairs—I mean, in 1795 or 1967. [LS chuckles] Good. Now we turn to the definitive articles, because these would only be preparatory—the first ones, the preliminary ones. Yes, on page 92. Now read this introduction.

Mr. Reinken:

Containing the Definitive Articles.⁴⁸

The state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state;⁴⁹ the natural state is one of war. This does not always mean open hostilities, but at least an unceasing threat of war. A state of peace, therefore, must be *established*, for in order to be secured against hostility it is not sufficient that hostilities simply be not committed; and, unless this security is pledged to each by his neighbor (a thing that can occur only in a civil state), each may treat his neighbor, from whom he demands this security, as an enemy.^{xxiv}

LS: Ya, and the beginning of the note.

Mr. Reinken:

We ordinarily assume that no one may act inimically toward another except when he has been actively injured by the other. This is quite correct if both are under civil law, for, by entering into such a state, they afford each other the requisite security through the sovereign which has power over both.^{xxv}

LS: Ya, and that is the ordinary view, and that is attacked by Kant. A man commits a lesion (how do you say *lädirt* in⁵⁰ [English]?) violates me, hurts me—violates me if he refuses to enter civil society together with me, because I have no guarantee against his potential hostility if we are not both subject to authority. This is also a Hobbean point of view.⁵¹ Kant extends that: not only for the entering [into] civil society, but also for the

^{xxiv} Ibid., 92.

^{xxv} Ibid.

states entering a world federation. The possibility arises here, not mentioned by Kant, that there might be a war to end all wars. You know? To force all states into a universal federation—and which is an interesting possibility, because it would be likely to be self-defeating. Yes.

And now Kant gives the conditions which are not fulfilled, not yet. The other articles stated before could be fulfilled even now, let us say in 1795, according to Kant. But the others require great changes. They require in a way a revolution all over Europe, as you see from the first definitive article.

Mr. Reinken: “*The Civil Constitution of Every State should be Republican*”^{xxvi}

LS: Ya, “ought to be republican.” It is an “ought.” Yes.⁵² And why is this so? Why must it be republican?

Mr. Reinken:

The only constitution which derives from the idea of the original compact, and on which all juridical legislation of a people must be based, is the republican. This constitution is established, firstly, by principles of the freedom of the members of a society (as men); secondly, by principles of dependence of all upon a single common legislation (as subjects); and, thirdly, by the law of their equality (as citizens). The republican constitution, therefore, is, with respect to law, the one which is the original basis of every form of civil constitution.^{xxvii}

LS: Now⁵³ this is what right as right demands, and as long as states are not republican they are fundamentally against right. Now the next one, next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The republican constitution, besides the purity of its origin (having sprung from the pure source of the concept of law), also gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace.^{xxviii}

LS: Ya. Now Kant develops then at some length that if the *people* have the say regarding war,⁵⁴ there will not be any war because they are the ones who will suffer from the war; but whereas if some prince or princeling in his castle surrounded by his courtiers and mistresses, completely separated from the people and from their sufferings, he doesn’t mind engaging war.

Well, we have some experiences which Kant could not have at that time.⁵⁵ But even without these experiences a great American statesman has written a criticism probably without knowing Kant’s writing—assuredly without knowing. Do you know where this question is discussed in a famous American document? *Federalist Papers*, where Hamilton shows⁵⁶ in one of the⁵⁷ first papers, shows at great length on the basis of

^{xxvi} Ibid., 93.

^{xxvii} Ibid., 93-94.

^{xxviii} Ibid., 94.

history, that republicans can be as warlike as monarchies.^{xxix} Although this fact which Kant mentions is not entirely irrelevant, but it doesn't settle the issue. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: He was surely overlooking what the French had just been doing.

LS: Ya, or he has looked at it as some people look at communist conquests, you know? I mean, there were people who said in the Second World War and after that the communist governments are peaceful and would never do such wicked things as subjugate other nations. Yes?

Student: There is also another possibility that he overlooked, that a democracy may be able to carry on a war far away, without appreciable burdens on the people at home.

LS: Ya, but look—I mean, you can say examples from antiquity mean nothing because these were all not true democracies but they had so many slaves. But still this is not very pertinent, because the wars waged say, by Athens, were waged by the citizen body, i.e. not by the slaves. And they were very warlike, and also they engaged in all kinds of bestial things. And⁵⁸ there were some hairbreadth escapes, as in the case of Lesbos, Mytilene, and so.⁵⁹ But there is surely no reason why a populace should not be, get wild—I mean, disregarding now entirely the possibility of a just and sensible war, there is no reason for that. But one reason probably is that Kant looked at the subjects whom he knew, who were all very peaceful people because Russia at that time had of course no universal military service, they were the scum of the country.⁶⁰ The officers were from the nobility, but otherwise—how did⁶¹ Wellington say? “Scum of the earth enlisted for drink.”^{xxx} And so these harmless artisans and peasants were not warlike, but in the moment they became citizens, things looked different. Yes.⁶²

Now these points which Kant makes⁶³ in saying what a republican government means—he will speak of it more in detail in the future, in the sequel. He speaks again of freedom.⁶⁴ A just constitution is built on, is constructed according to principles of freedom of the members of society as human beings. Now we have heard this before⁶⁵ in one of the writings we have read here, but I think we should now discuss a parallel, which is Kant's more systematic statement in his *Metaphysics of Morals*. And there is a heading:

The Innate Right is only a Single One. There is only a single inborn right, and that is freedom. Freedom, i.e., independence of any other's coercing arbitrariness. To the extent to which that freedom can coexist with the freedom of everybody else according to a universal law. This is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his being a human being.^{xxxi}

Yes.

^{xxix} *Federalist* 6.

^{xxx} Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), British statesman and military commander. Wellington made this remark of his own troops after they failed to pursue the routed French after the victory in the Battle of Vitoria (1813), turning instead to loot the French supply wagons.

^{xxxi} Ak 6:237.

To this freedom belongs the right to do that against others which in itself does not lessen what belongs to them, provided they do not accept it.⁶⁶ Of this nature is the following, for example, to communicate to them one's thoughts, to tell them something, or to promise them something, whether true and⁶⁷ sincerely, or untrue and insincerely. Because it depends entirely on them whether they wish to believe him or not. Kant makes clear in the sequel that cheating, of course, strictly understood,⁶⁸ that is a violation of the others; but if I promise someone without the other giving me anything, pie in the sky, and never meaning to give it away, that is my perfect right. But the interesting point is this: that Kant is very strict in regarding lying, even regarding white lies, as morally evil. So we are by duty never to lie. But we have the right to lie,⁶⁹ i.e., we cannot be coerced to say the truth. That is the specific meaning of "right" in Kant.

Now⁷⁰ shortly after that passage there is this remarkable passage: Why is ethics ordinarily called "the doctrine of duties," and not also "the doctrine of rights?" No one prior to Kant has raised that question. But now the emphasis has shifted so much to the rights, that the question was: Why should not ethics be the doctrine of rights at least as much as the doctrine of duties? That is interesting.

Now, and in Kant you can easily see what this pronouncement of Kant means, because⁷¹ if this right to lie did not exist, then it would be possible for the government to coerce people to say the truth. And what would this mean? Severe censorship of every conversation, however harmless. So if you want to have liberty, you must grant quite a few rights which are not compatible with morality strictly understood. If we have some familiarity with earlier thought, we are of course surprised time and again how lax the now ruling principles are. But this laxity has one and only one justification: freedom.

Now,⁷² as for this notion of freedom, this has never been properly studied because we use when speaking of freedom the word⁷³ which was *en vogue* in all times.⁷⁴ Very few people are of any strictness. Freedom was the key word in Athens, and in Sparta, and in Rome—and everywhere in the world, so to speak. But what did it mean? The word freedom has undergone many changes. One of the most important documents for understanding the issue of freedom is Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, and I will mention here only one point. This is a very difficult book, a very subtle book. And let me limit myself to saying this much: Montesquieu's book begins with the suggestion, rather than the assertion, that the highest principle of civil society is virtue, which is the old-fashioned view of Plato and Aristotle and many others but which had become questionable in modern times when self-preservation had become the key, so much so that Locke in particular could say [that] civil government has nothing to do with virtue and vice of the citizens. So⁷⁵ Montesquieu repeats this assertion with uninteresting modifications, and he repeats it in order to lead away from it.

Later on, roughly in book 11, he speaks of a principle different from virtue, and that he calls freedom. And the most impressive embodiment⁷⁶ of *freedom* is the British constitution as he understood it . . . Now⁷⁷ England is a model country for Montesquieu—whether he means this literally or in order to induce the French to move away from the

then ruling absolutism is not an important question. But England⁷⁸ has another character apart from being a free [republic]. He calls England a republic—I mean, although it was officially, as now, a kingdom, but he saw quite well that⁷⁹ the England of the eighteenth century was not a monarchy in the sense in which France was . . . Now England has this quality of being free and a republic, and it is a special kind of republic. So of course, not like Sparta: it is a commercial republic. And what is the characteristic of commercial societies? Now I read to you only one passage, which speaks volumes.

Book 20, chapter 1.

Commerce heals destructive prejudices. And this is almost the general rule. Wherever there are gentle manners, there is commerce, and wherever there is commerce there are gentle manners. [In French, *des mœurs douces*—LS] One should therefore not surprised if our manners are less ferocious than they were before. Commerce has made that the knowledge of the manners of all nations has penetrated everywhere. One has compared them among themselves, and great goods have resulted therefrom. One can say that the laws of commerce [meaning the laws regulating commerce as well as the laws which commerce obeys (laws not laid down by any legislature)—LS] that the laws of commerce perfect the manners for the same reason why these same laws *ruin* manners.

Now manners here is the French *les mœurs*, which means of course also morals. Commerce corrupts the pure morals. This was the subject of Plato's complaints. "It polishes and makes gentle the barbaric manners as we see every day."^{xxxii} So in other words, we have an increase in human kindness at the price of considerable corruption. Montesquieu is willing to pay the price—that is at least my understanding of it.

There⁸⁰ is a somewhat later statement by someone who knew the eighteenth century very well and Montesquieu in particular, namely, Edmund Burke, when he speaks of the new morality which⁸¹ had exploded at that time in France. And where the virtue the French called *humanité*, humanity, is appealed to at the price of the *severe* virtues, meaning the virtues which restrain the appetite . . . Now such a change has doubtless taken place in the course of the last few hundred years. We would not notice it as little as we notice the air which we breathe if we do not engage in some readings of some great books, or sometimes even less great books simply belonging to an older time.

And⁸² that is very remarkable. Kant, who presents⁸³ [himself] at the first glance as the severest moralist among the philosophers, is closely connected with this movement toward less strict manners [which] was so powerful in his century and in the centuries following him. Yes?

Student: Are you suggesting that Kant is conscious of being part of that movement?

LS: To some extent, yes. How could he fail to do so?⁸⁴ You see, the point is this: there was always understood in a practical manner that you cannot forbid by legislation all kinds of vices.⁸⁵ The most famous example is of course prostitution, which was always

^{xxxii} Presumably Strauss's translation.

more or less tolerated although regarded as very wrong, ya? And other things. But⁸⁶ people did these kinds of things in a practical manner, you know, here being strict and there less strict according to circumstances. But what happened in the modern century was that one wanted to find a principle which would allow you to draw a hard and fast, universally valid line between what belongs and what does not belong to the sphere of civil legislation.

And now in the moment you said, like Locke for example, virtue and vice is of no concern of the civil lawgiver—his only concern is keeping peace, external peace. And that [is what] Hobbes of course also implied.⁸⁷ That is the Kantian view, only Kant tries to give it a more fundamental basis by divorcing⁸⁸ the sphere of the civil legislator from self-preservation and basing it on freedom.

Same Student: He also doesn't seem—

LS: But therefore his freedom must include all these kinds of things like lying, for example. And—

Same Student: He doesn't seem to regard the old virtues as virtues anymore.

LS: Ya, in a way he does, but this part of the moral law, let's say, which has to do with virtues, is in a way the less pressing part. The most pressing part is what you may or may not do to other human beings. That is to say, conflict, i.e., peace.⁸⁹ And therefore in this early statement which I read at the beginning of this course when Kant says, "Rousseau has brought me into right shape," namely, he has made him recognize the supremacy of morality, Kant speaks in the very same context of the rights of humanity. That is the point. This morality is primarily concerned with the rights of humanity rather than with morality in the full sense,⁹⁰ by which you do not directly hurt or harm another, can we . . .

Needless to say, Kant of course, even in his most libertine mood, was a man of extreme rigorousness compared with what is now accepted as tolerable.⁹¹ I think I don't have to labor that point. Good.⁹² And what Mr. Dibbs said last time, the examples which are most well-known are indelicate, and therefore one shouldn't speak about that. Is that what you proposed?

Mr. Dibbs: I'm sorry I don't . . . last class.

LS:⁹³ You suggested last time that one should refrain from using indelicate examples, and unfortunately indelicate examples are the most striking ones [laughter] when you speak of this matter.

Now let us now return to the point now under discussion. The civil constitution in every state ought to be republican. Now this sounds quite radical, but Kant makes it clear in the sequel that is a little bit later, that a republican constitution has nothing whatever to do with democracy—God forbid, ya? But⁹⁴ republicanism is a certain *spirit* of constitution

opposed to the despotic spirit, so it has nothing to do with form of government strictly understood. Therefore an absolute monarch may rule in a republican spirit, just as a democracy may be despotic. And for example: if, like Frederick the Great according to Kant's presentation elsewhere, [the monarch] considers in every case, in laying down the law: Could the people have approved or could they have legislated it themselves, given sufficient information? Then it is right. But he nevertheless was of course the sole legislator. He would have come into troubles, of course—because in Frederick's famous⁹⁵ code of laws, the hereditary nobility, with all its great privileges, was firmly entrenched and which according to Kant's notion no people would ever do—I mean, block themselves⁹⁶ the upward way for ever and ever. Yes.

Now let us see,⁹⁷ let us read perhaps the second paragraph. Where is that? "All form of government which is not representative," ya?

Mr. Reinken:⁹⁸

Every form of government that is not representative is properly formless; the legislator being as little capable of being united in the same person with the executor of his will, as in a syllogism the universal of the major is capable of serving as the particular of the minor.^{xxxiii}

LS: So strictly speaking republican government means representative government. Never something like direct democracy. That is wholly extreme. Yes? And then?

Mr. Reinken:

Although an *aristocracy* and *autocracy* are defective, inasmuch as they are susceptible of the vice here mentioned, they nevertheless contain the possibility of representative administration; so far at least as Frederick II insinuated when he declared himself the first servant of the state; whereas—^{xxxiv}

LS: No, no, that *he* is merely the first servant. Ya, ya.

Mr. Reinken:

whereas a *democracy* renders the representative system impossible, everyone striving to be master. It may therefore be affirmed, that, the smaller the number of governors, and the more extensive the representation, the nearer the constitution approaches to republicanism [Reinken chuckles], and may even arrive at it by successive reforms.^{xxxv}

LS: Yes. So in other words,⁹⁹ that Kant was here hundred percent sincere, I cannot bring myself to believe. But he could say broadly—not saying [that] everyone one thinks is not strictly speaking a lie. He said only the part which was at that time sayable.

^{xxxiii} In these passages, Reinken uses a different translation than the one in *On History*. His reading matches Immanuel Kant, *Project for a Perpetual Peace* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1796), 18.

^{xxxiv} Ibid.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

There is a note, let me see. Ya, let us read the note when he quotes Mallet du Pan.

Mr. Reinken:

in his pompous but senseless language, pretends to have at length attained to a conviction, after long experience, of the truth of this well-known saying of Pope's:

"For forms of government let fools contest:
"The state that's best administer'd is best."

If this means, that the state the best administered is the best administered, he has, to make use of an expression of Swift's, "cracked a nut to come at a maggot." But if this saying is to signify, that in the state the best administered, the government is the best, as to its constitution, then nothing is more false; for a good administration proves nothing in favour of the government. Who has reigned better than Titus and Marcus Aurelius? and yet one had for his successor a Domitian, and the other a Commodus; which could never have happened in a good constitution, their inaptitude to this post having been soon enough known, and the power of the sovereign bring sufficient to exclude them.^{xxxvi}

LS: Ya. What does this mean regarding the question of monarchy? Now these—

Mr. Reinken: No, Frederick William II.¹⁰⁰

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken: . . . inappreciative of Königsberg.

LS: Ya. In other words,¹⁰¹ surely no hereditary monarchy, except by accident. But yes. And that is quite interesting; whether Kant thought of that when he wrote that I am not so sure. Yes.

Now¹⁰² let us turn to the second article, and let us read only the second half of the first paragraph. "This would be a league of nations— " Ya?

Mr. Reinken: "without the people however forming one and the same state, the idea—"^{xxxvii}

LS: No, no: "without being a state of nations." It is a league of nations, without being a state of nations. Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxxvi} Ibid., 19-20.

^{xxxvii} Ibid., 21.

the idea of a state supposing the relation of a sovereign to the people, of a superior to his inferior. Now several nations, united into one state, would no longer form but one; which contradicts the supposition, the question here being of the reciprocal rights of nations, inasmuch as they compose a multitude of different states, which ought not to be incorporated into one and the same state.^{xxxviii}

LS: Why not? Why not a world state? Why only a league of nations? This question, what is your answer to this question?

Student: As I understood it, one state leaves no alternatives and offers the possibility of despotism, if not the sure progress toward it.

LS: Ya, but he speaks of it later. He speaks of it later. We will come to that later. But here he simply presupposes it, at this point. Yes, what you said is quite true.

Now Kant speaks later, in the sequel on page 99,¹⁰³ of the very dubious international law¹⁰⁴ of his time, which nevertheless points to a league of nations, and also that the league of nations does not limit the sovereignty of each state. At the end of this paragraph, let me see, on page 101, paragraph 2.

Mr. Reinken:

The practicability (objective reality) of this idea of federation, which should gradually spread to all states and thus lead to perpetual peace, can be proved. For if fortune directs that a powerful and enlightened people can make itself a republic, which by its nature must be inclined to perpetual peace, this gives a fulcrum to the federation with other states so that they may adhere to it and thus secure freedom under the idea of the law of nations. By more and more such associations, the federation may be gradually extended.^{xxxix}

LS: Yes. What does this nameless statement refer to?

Mr. Reinken: The Directory of France.

LS: Yes. The French revolutionary government.¹⁰⁵ Yes. A mighty and enlightened nation has become a republic, and which *must* be directed toward perpetual peace. And¹⁰⁶ one could of course say the French revolutionary wars were imposed on France in the first years by the attacks on the part of the absolute monarchies, but this changed in the course of years . . . and especially when Napoleon enters the scene. Yes. But the point is here [that] the actualization of the movement toward perpetual peace depends on *tychē*—on chance, fortune. It so happened that somewhere a republic was established and this might spread. Good. On page 105,¹⁰⁷ paragraph 2, he refers to another reason of change.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxxviii} Ibid.

^{xxxix} Reinken resumes reading from *Perpetual Peace* in *On History*, 100.

Since the narrower or wider community of the peoples of the earth has developed so far that a violation of rights in one place is felt throughout the world, the idea of a law of world citizenship is no high-flown or exaggerated notion. It is a supplement to the unwritten code of the civil and international law, indispensable for the maintenance of the public human rights and hence also of perpetual peace.^{xl}

LS: So let us stop here. So in other words, the fact that human communications, communications among human beings, have become global more and more in the course of the modern centuries, this is another factor pointing toward the possibility of perpetual peace. But these things are by no means sufficient. And therefore these [things] like the French Revolution and the fact that there is international trade are by no means sufficient. And therefore Kant speaks in the next section of the *guarantee* of perpetual peace. Hitherto he has spoken only of an “ought” or of a wish, of a pious wish, and now he has to speak of the guarantee. And this guarantee¹⁰⁸ can be given only by nature. It is beyond man’s power. But nature, working through man¹⁰⁹ —but not man’s intentions, man’s morality—will it bring it about; but nature will bring it about in its way. And Kant speaks here in the note [of] why he does not wish to speak of providence and, instead, regards it as more appropriate to speak of nature.

Now the point which he makes here (we have already heard this before), that war is a part of nature’s teleology: nature uses man’s social anti-sociality, as Kant had called it earlier, in order to force him first into society, civil society, and then forces the established societies or states into a league of nations. So without becoming in any way more moral, man will be compelled by nature to act according to a moral demand. Just as someone might say today that fear of thermonuclear destruction has nothing to do with morality—and yet this fear might induce men to abstain from war and therefore to comply with a moral demand.

Now this brings us to the question¹¹⁰ which we will take up next time. We cannot finish our discussion of these additions here. How is it called in English, how does he call it?

Student: Supplements.

LS: Supplements. Yes, now the great question which arrives here is this: here there is an amoral compulsion exerted by nature in the direction of morality. How is that related to man’s morality? It’s a fraught question. Perhaps we read one passage, on page 111, paragraph 1 beginning. “So much.”

Mr. Reinken:

So much for the measures nature takes to lead the human race, considered as a class of animals, to her own end.^{xli}

^{xl} Ibid., 105.

^{xli} Ibid., 111.

LS: So in other words, here that has nothing to do with morality. What nature tries to do [is] preserve this particularly nasty race, the human race, and to protect it against its own destruction. And now¹¹¹ the sequel.

Mr. Reinken:

Now we come to the question concerning that which is most essential in the design of perpetual peace: What has nature done with regard to this end which man's own reason makes his duty? That is, what has nature done to favor man's moral purpose, and how has she guaranteed (by compulsion but without prejudice to his freedom) that he shall do that which he ought to but does not do under the laws of freedom?^{xlii}

LS: Yes. So that is the precise question and we will discuss the answer next time. The general character of the answer is this: The mechanism of nature, working through man's fear of destruction and what have you, brings about¹¹² external compliance with the moral law—what Kant calls legality, but not morality. So a philosophy of history, to generalize it, can only be the history of man's progressive legality. It cannot be the history of man's progressive morality, because each man himself—it depends solely on each man.

¹ Deleted "to deal...."

² Deleted "Now that...."

³ Deleted "see...."

⁴ Deleted "in able...."

⁵ Deleted "but Kant...yes."

⁶ Deleted "Kant...."

⁷ Deleted "the...."

⁸ Deleted "the thing which...."

⁹ Deleted "neutral power...."

¹⁰ Deleted "speaks first...."

¹¹ Deleted "Now, so...I will...we will...I will [inaudible words]."

¹² Deleted "somewhat...."

¹³ Deleted "Meriwether spoke...."

¹⁴ Deleted "So and...Kant...."

¹⁵ Deleted "had...."

¹⁶ Deleted "then you can't...shouldn't...."

¹⁷ Text has "*No Treaty of Peace Shall Be Held Valid in Which There is Tacitly Reserved Matter for a Future War.*"

¹⁸ Deleted "that is...."

¹⁹ Deleted "the...."

²⁰ Deleted "the next point is...."

²¹ Text has "*No Independent States, Large or Small, Shall Come under the Dominion of Another State by Inheritance, Exchange, Purchase, or Donation.*"

²² Deleted "the point...."

²³ Deleted "and then we...."

²⁴ Deleted "has...."

²⁵ Deleted "more...."

²⁶ Deleted "so long...."

²⁷ Deleted "**Reinken:** "But not—"

²⁸ Deleted "the...."

²⁹ Deleted "and if...."

^{xlii} Ibid.

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- ³⁰ Deleted “in this....”
³¹ Deleted “do you....”
³² Deleted “They were....”
³³ Deleted “it’s [inaudible word] 20, in which....”
³⁴ Reinken omits “(percussores).”
³⁵ Reinken omits “(venefici).”
³⁶ Reinken omits “(perduellio).”
³⁷ Reinken omits “(*bellum internecinum*).”
³⁸ Deleted “is....”
³⁹ Deleted “just...can be just....”
⁴⁰ Reinken omits “(*bellum punitivum*).”
⁴¹ Reinken omits “(*uti exploratoribus*).”
⁴² Deleted “Yeah but....”
⁴³ Deleted “you may very well....”
⁴⁴ Deleted “which....”
⁴⁵ Deleted “are...have...have....”
⁴⁶ Deleted “their putting...their putting....”
⁴⁷ Deleted “government has some....”
⁴⁸ Text is in full capitals. Reinken omits “FOR PERPETUAL PEACE AMONG STATES.”
⁴⁹ Reinken omits “(*status naturalis*).”
⁵⁰ Deleted “in...in....”
⁵¹ Deleted “In this...but since this leads....”
⁵² Deleted “Because....”
⁵³ Deleted “this is the only one....”
⁵⁴ Deleted “they will not....”
⁵⁵ Deleted “And....”
⁵⁶ Deleted “rather....”
⁵⁷ Deleted “earliest....”
⁵⁸ Deleted “only....”
⁵⁹ Deleted “which to see these terrors..”
⁶⁰ Deleted “Apart from....”
⁶¹ Deleted “**Reinken:** Wellington—”
⁶² Deleted “Now here are a few....”
⁶³ Deleted “in defining a....”
⁶⁴ Deleted “Freedom is....”
⁶⁵ Deleted “and....”
⁶⁶ Deleted “This is....”
⁶⁷ Deleted “serious....”
⁶⁸ Deleted “is not....”
⁶⁹ Deleted “right that we have.”
⁷⁰ Deleted “in the....”
⁷¹ Deleted “if there were...if there were....”
⁷² Deleted “for the....”
⁷³ Deleted “what....”
⁷⁴ Deleted “we....”
⁷⁵ Deleted “but....”
⁷⁶ Deleted “of this....”
⁷⁷ Deleted “the British....”
⁷⁸ Deleted “has some...is some....”
⁷⁹ Deleted “this....”
⁸⁰ Deleted “later....”
⁸¹ Deleted “has....”
⁸² Deleted “Kant....”
⁸³ Deleted “itself.”
⁸⁴ Deleted “How could he....”

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- 85 Deleted "For example...."
- 86 Deleted "there was not...."
- 87 Deleted "Then you...."
- 88 Deleted "this kind...."
- 89 Deleted "Only...."
- 90 Deleted "where...that which is not...."
- 91 Deleted "I don't...."
- 92 Deleted "And, yes...."
- 93 Deleted "You said...."
- 94 Deleted "the republic...."
- 95 Deleted "law...."
- 96 Deleted "the way...."
- 97 Deleted "what...."
- 98 Deleted "Here we are.."
- 99 Deleted "that was...."
- 100 Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Reinken:** No Frederick William II—"
- 101 Deleted "it would...nor would...."
- 102 Deleted "in...."
- 103 Deleted "that the...."
- 104 Deleted "which...."
- 105 Deleted "And that is...."
- 106 Deleted "which in its...."
- 107 Deleted "2...."
- 108 Deleted "is...."
- 109 Deleted "but the...."
- 110 Deleted "where...."
- 111 Deleted "now the next...."
- 112 Deleted "compliance with...."

Session 15: May 23, 1967

Leo Strauss: This is a fine paper, Mr. Morgan.ⁱ This crucial point you made, that there is no necessary connection between Kant's moral philosophy and his philosophy of history, we may have to reconsider.

There are only two points which I would like to make. You spoke of an intrascientific conflict. Well, I think¹ [that] according to Kant's intention, one would have to speak² [of] the conflict between a science and a pseudo-science. Ya? Good. Now, and then you referred to Rousseau; and when Kant speaks of the nation of devils, that this is directed against Rousseau because Rousseau had said only gods could establish a just constitution. But did you look up Rousseau?

Mr. Morgan: Yes.

LS: What does he say?

Mr. Morgan: Well, he says that a democracy—

LS: A democracy. But what does Kant say about democracy?

Mr. Morgan: That a democracy is a possibility only in the infinite future, that—

LS: No, Kant rejects democracy. A democracy is inferior to aristocracy and to monarchy—that he says explicitly, because there is not a clear distinction between the legislator and, in particular, the judge. In a democracy the sovereign people—I mean democracy in the old sense—the sovereign people would be both the legislator and the judge, as it was in Athens, for example.³ I don't believe that the statement is directed against Rousseau. Did you have any evidence for this?

Mr. Morgan: Only a suggestion. I think it is in Friedrich. I'm not sure—

LS: Ya, well [laughter], that is just an opinion, and if no evidence is produced it is an unfounded opinion. No.

Mr. Morgan: I was under the impression though that if all men become enlightened, which is a possibility, that then—

LS: Not seriously considered by Kant, because he always speaks of the scholars and their special function—

Mr. Morgan: But it's as serious as *Perpetual Peace*, though, isn't it?

ⁱ Strauss comments on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

LS: No. I mean—well, let me say, what Kant expects is that properly enlightened philosophers, men who have learned the pure principles of morality from Kant, might influence gradually the governments, you know, and create a kind of opinion which the governments would have to respect. But not an appeal over the heads of the governments to the people.⁴

So Friedrich:⁵ I know him quite well. We both come from Germany, and then from the same school. But he is—how should I say?—he is somewhat too eager to bridge the gulf between Kant’s political philosophy and democracy, you know?⁶ And I believe that is underlying this particular point. I say this with all due respect, but still I can’t tolerate a misinterpretation. [Laughter] Good.

Now⁷ we have not yet completed our discussion of what we started last time, and we begin on page 111. Now this is in the section called “The Definitive Article on Eternal Peace,” First Edition. Yes. Now I just think that Mr. Reinken will be so good as to read this section. “We are not compelled by any—”⁸

Mr. Reinken:

Even if a people⁹ were not forced by internal discord to submit to public laws, war would compel them to do so, for we have already seen that nature has placed each people near another which presses upon it, and against this it must form itself into a state in order to defend itself. Now—ⁱⁱ

LS: As a power. So,¹⁰ you know, this is all very realistic and very Hobbean in particular. Yes. Now go on.

Mr. Reinken: “Now the republic constitution—”ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Republican, again, does not mean democratic in Kant, never. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “is the only one entirely fitting to the rights of man.”^{iv}

LS: “To the right of men,” ya. So here now the moral consideration enters. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

But it is the most difficult to establish and even harder to preserve, so that many say a republic would have to be a nation of angels.”^v

LS: “Many” means at least not only Rousseau, ya. I mean, this must have been one of those common sayings. I couldn’t tell you now where it occurs, but it must have been very common. It makes very much sense to say—well, in the *Federalist Papers* you find

ⁱⁱ Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 111.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid., 111-112.

the statement, “only a nation of philosophers,” ya?^{vi} which is almost the same as a nation of angels [laughter]. Pardon?

Student: It says that if all men were angels no government would be necessary.^{vii}

LS: Ya. Oh . . . ya, well, it must have been a very common saying.¹¹ It must be a state of angels, yes?

Mr. Reinken:

because men with their selfish inclinations are not capable of a constitution of such sublime form. But precisely with these inclinations nature comes to the aid of the general will established on reason, which is revered even though impotent in practice. Thus it is only a question of a good organization of the state (which does lie in man’s power), whereby the powers of each selfish inclination are so arranged in opposition that one moderates or destroys the ruinous effect of the other. The consequence for reason is the same as if none of them existed, and man is forced to be a good citizen even if not a morally good person.^{viii}

The problem is: “Given a multitude of rational beings requiring universal laws for their preservation, but each of whom is secretly inclined to exempt himself from them, to establish a constitution in such a way that, although their private intentions conflict, they check each other, with the result that their public conduct is the same as if they had no such intentions.”

A problem like this must be capable of solution; it does not require that we know how to attain the moral improvement of men but only that we should know the mechanism of nature in order to use it on men, organizing the conflict of the hostile intentions present in a people in such a way that they must compel themselves to submit to coercive laws.^{ix}

LS: “They must compel each other” would be more literal. What I call the horizontal limitation of freedom, not the vertical—a compulsion exerted only by other human beings. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: to submit one another—

to submit to coercive laws. Thus a state of peace is established in which laws have force. We can see, even in actual states, which are far from perfectly organized—^x

^{vi} *Federalist* 49.

^{vii} *Federalist* 51.

^{viii} In original: “The problem of organizing a state, however hard it may seem, can be solved even for a race of devils, if only they are intelligent.”

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 112.

^x *Ibid.*

LS: “which are still very imperfectly organized”; still very far remote from being based on the right of man. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

that in their foreign relations they approach that which the idea of right prescribes. This is so in spite of the fact that the intrinsic element of morality is certainly not the cause of it. (A good constitution is not to be expected from morality, but, conversely, a good moral condition of a people is to be expected only under a good constitution.) Instead of genuine morality, the mechanism of nature brings it to pass through selfish inclinations, which naturally conflict outwardly but which can be used by reason as a means for its own end, the sovereignty of law, and, as concerns the state, for promoting and securing internal and external peace.^{xi}

LS: Ya. Thank you very much.¹² Now this is a very important passage, and Kant has never stated it as forcefully as here. Now this is of course something quite alien to earlier thought, that a nation of devils,¹³ provided that they are not fools, could establish a perfectly just order. Not a perfectly moral order, but a perfectly just order, i.e., where all laws are just and are in the main obeyed. Individual criminals are uninteresting because they will exist at all times.¹⁴ However, and that is a crucial point which you missed, I believe, when you said Kant’s philosophy of history has nothing to do with moral philosophy—

Mr. Morgan: It’s not a necessary connection.

LS:¹⁵ Ya, but it is morally relevant, very relevant.

Mr. Morgan: Relevant, yes.

LS: Ya. Now let us go into that. The mechanism of nature, whether used by man as Adam Smith or the *Federalist Papers* propose or without any conscious use by man, brings about the just order. But only the external order, what Kant calls legality in contradistinction to morality.¹⁶

There is a statement of Hobbes which comes close to what Kant says. It is not identical. [It is] that Hobbes says the question of the establishment of peace, stable peace,¹⁷ it depends decisively on man the maker. Man is also the matter of this thing. But if the maker is sufficiently clever and intelligent, he can mold that matter.^{xii} That comes close to what Kant says. In other words, there is no chance (or however you might call it) which has to be taken into consideration and which might counteract the noblest intentions and the wisest plans. There is an inner necessity for the good, for the perfect, social order being established.

^{xi} Ibid., 112-113.

^{xii} *Leviathan*, chapter 29.

Generally speaking, in the premodern view it was understood—we read only in Plato and Aristotle, there is a perfect social order which is possible, which can be established. But there is no intrinsic necessity whatever for its being established. The perfect formulation in Plato: the condition for its establishment is literally the coincidence, falling together of philosophy and political power. A coincidence means, of course, something which you cannot plan, for which you can at best hope or pray.

What the modern rebellion against the classical scheme (that rebellion starting with Machiavelli) is, [is this]: We do not want to have *imagined* commonwealths, as Plato and Aristotle have imagined, [and] in a way as Dante had imagined them, but we want to have an order, the actualization of which is at least probable because it is in agreement with what men actually desire at all times. Hobbes's¹⁸ scheme is¹⁹ required by man's desire for self-preservation, than which nothing is more powerful according to Hobbes. And therefore it is much easier to get than one which is based on man's inclination towards virtue, which inclination is not very visible in many cases, and therefore seems to be unrealistic, imaginary, utopian.

What these philosophers of history like Kant and more clearly, of course, Hegel say is this: there is not only a probability, but an intrinsic necessity of the ideal and the real converging. In Kant's case, of course, they converge only asymptotically; in Hegel they converge actually. And in Marx, as you know, there is also an actual convergence, although in the near future. The near future is changed from time to time from 1870 to 1918-19, and then again—what was Khrushchev's^{xiii} date? I think the end of the century. Good.

But now let us come back to Kant. This mechanism of nature, whether used by man or without man's use of it, will bring about the realization of the just order, i.e. of legality as legality. I mean, these men will still be crooks, devils. They will obey this just order only because it doesn't pay, or they will be punished for not obeying. They will not obey from conviction. But still, it is otherwise a just order.

Why is it not the moral order as distinguished from the legal order? Although the legal order is a morally required order, [it is]²⁰ not itself moral because it requires only external compliance.²¹ And legal, of course, does not mean here positive law only. I hope that's clear. It would be, in older language which Kant does not always eschew, natural law, but referring only to the external action. Why is it not the moral order? And why can the moral order not be brought about by this mechanism of nature, whether used by man or not used by man?

Student: Because it is not the result of freedom.

LS:²² Man cannot be forced to be moral. He cannot be forced by nature or what have you, or even by God to be moral. And still less, of course, by a mere mechanism of the passions, yes? Morality is the affair of each individual, and that is undeterminable,

^{xiii} Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (1894-1971), Russian politician, First Secretary of the Communist Party from 1953 to 1964.

unpredictable; and therefore²³ that is not a matter regarding which a philosopher can say anything. Hence philosophy of history, as I put it, is outside the gate but it is directly at the gate, you know? It is relevant, very relevant. No moral man can be unconcerned with perpetual peace and with the republican order, but he is not responsible for it.

Now there is something else, however, another reason why this distinction is so crucial; and why therefore philosophy of history cannot be a part of Kant's system strictly understood. Now in order to substantiate it, we would have to read the sections of the *Critique of Practical Reason* dealing with the highest good, and which then bring up the question of the immortality of the soul (part of which we read on an earlier occasion) and the existence of God—[with] the immortality of the soul preceding the discussion of the existence of God. And²⁴ that is Kant's doctrine of the highest good. The highest good according to Kant is not identical with morality. Morality is the core of the highest good, but not the whole highest good.²⁵ Morality makes the man worthy of happiness, but it does not as such guarantee his happiness. Think of Job if you don't know living examples.²⁶ The highest good consists of both morality and happiness for those who are worthy of happiness. The fundamental view that morality is the core of happiness but not simply identical with happiness is, of course, also the old view of Aristotle in particular. But²⁷ in Kant this takes on a somewhat different meaning.

Now²⁸ what Kant says amounts to this: there is no correspondence of morality and happiness in this life, nor will there ever be, in however enlightened a future, such a correspondence. Or more generally stated: there cannot ever be a complete solution of the human problem in this life. And this being the case, it is necessary to postulate immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. And this means, of course, again for this reason, there cannot be a philosophy of history. A philosophy of history in the strict sense, as elaborated finally by Hegel, presents a situation in which the human problem is completely solved. Hegel knows²⁹ (and from his own time, in which he thought he had already been solved) there are all kinds of people who are miserable although they deserve not to be miserable. The long list of terrible things which³⁰ led Hamlet to despair, you remember it, remember the list? The laws, the lay, and so on. And history goes on and on. But³¹ Hegel say: Well,³² this [is] petty; or that there are people who wholly undeservedly are miserable because they love a woman, let us say, and the woman doesn't love them in turn. Well, it can't be helped: a man must get over this, [the] minor petty difficulties, although another's . . . cannot be blamed if he sheds some tears about matters of this kind. Be this as it may,³³ because there cannot be a correspondence of happiness and morality in this life, and because morality as such is the affair of each and will always remain of course the affair of each individuals—for these two reasons, philosophy of history does not fill the bill, and we need the postulation of life eternal—and therefore, the³⁴ [philosophy of history] cannot be so important.

And the denial of these two Kantian points is then the soul of Hegel, because Hegel could not have said the human problem is solved, nor could Marx have said the human problem will be completely solved in the realm of freedom.³⁵ The Hegel-Marxian reasons are then these; not necessarily that morality is not important.³⁶ Of Marx himself, still less of Hegel, I wouldn't say that. But I would simply say if man³⁷ act[s] according to morality

and habitually (minor exceptions happen all the time and are of no great concern),³⁸ then what more do you want? If you say you do not know whether this worker³⁹ in a Marxist scheme⁴⁰ does his duty only because he is afraid of punishment or of his bad reputation: How do you know?, Hegel and Marx would say. Referring to Kant, no one can know whether a man who acts legally acts from moral purpose or not. That you cannot know. So this is a matter which is wholly undecidable, and we are perfectly satisfied if people are good citizens, as Kant calls it, because we can never know whether they will be good men.

And as for the other question, the⁴¹ lack of correspondence of happiness and morality. For example: well, if we take the case of unhappy love.⁴² The position of Hegel and Marx is then very tough.⁴³ Well, we can't help that, and⁴⁴ that is not worthy of a serious human being to worry too greatly about that⁴⁵ after he has reached a certain age. And some people today, I hear, who were originally Marxists make a synthesis of Marx and Freud and said: Well, those who have such unfortunate love troubles will be sent, free of charge, to a psychiatrist [laughter], and he will guarantee that kind of private happiness which the wonderful institutions of the perfect society cannot possibly provide [laughter]. Is this not true? Is this not what Mr. [Fromm]^{xiv} means, ultimately? I mean, I have never read anything [laughter] of his, but I have heard about it. Is this not a kind of . . . Well, I do not wish to be unjust to him, but from what I've heard I figured that out, that this would be the case. And this is now, I believe, in the West at any rate, admitted to be a defect of original Marxism: that it did not consider sufficiently the worries of the individual.⁴⁶

You come from a Marxist country, you should be able to tell us?

Student: Oh, I was only 12 then. I was happy then. [Laughter]

LS: Oh, I see.⁴⁷ But they don't make use of psychoanalysis?

Same Student: They don't believe in it, no.

LS: Ya, I know. But the Western—

Same Student: They don't even read their own Marx; they just read the *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto*, so they have nothing in common with Erich Fromm. [Students chuckle]

LS: Ya. And⁴⁸ I can only repeat that to that extent you were quite right. That the core of morality as Kant understands it does not lead to philosophy of history. That simply tells you a categorical imperative: thou canst because thou oughtst. And if this is a matter which does not depend on your private ability to achieve—say, the just society or perpetual peace—then you have of course no responsibility, except you can wish and pray that your government or the government of the world will become more rational than they are at

^{xiv} Erich Fromm (1900-1980), German psychologist, member of the Frankfurt School and advocate of a Freud-Marx synthesis.

present.⁴⁹ To that extent, it is quite true. But we must also add: history is morally relevant, for its goal is required by morality. But if that goal were not also recommended by calculation (a nation of devils), it would remain wholly utopian, and only because it is also demanded by calculation does it have a ghost of a chance to be realized. History, as we would say—or Nature, as Kant still says—works and can work only through amoral or immoral means, the alternative being incompatible with human freedom. Morality alone cannot bring into being the just order. Morality cannot guarantee public peace. You remember the section in your edition on page 106 entitled “The Guarantee of Perpetual Peace.”

Now⁵⁰ this guarantee on which Kant depends, both in domestic and in international affairs, is of a rather low moral order, naturally: I mean selfish desires. And that is a strange coming together in Kant’s thought of a very severe moralism with⁵¹ a kind of thinking that can best be traced to Machiavelli or to other bad guys, as they say [laughter]. And I would take the liberty even to consider some of the *Federalist Papers* as belonging to the bad guys [laughter]. I hope no patriot will take this ill, because I do not mean it ill. Ya. Now, Mr. Schaeffer?

Mr. Schaeffer: You say that the goal of history is offered as an alternative consolation to those who cannot believe in God?

LS: No. I mean—that would mean,⁵² how should I say, such a shocking proposal that everyone⁵³ would shudder at the thought. There are difficulties in Kant which no one ever solved, but I would say [that] whereas in other cases, for example in the case of Locke, I have not hesitated⁵⁴ to assert even in public that his serious view is much less respectable than is generally thought. In the case of Kant, I believe that would not make sense. It would not make sense.

Mr. Schaeffer: So in other words, he keeps repeating that—well,⁵⁵ in the historical writings he says that if it weren’t for natural necessity bringing this about, then all our working towards it would seem fruitless.

LS: Yes—

Mr. Schaeffer: But in the moral writings he implies that—

LS: No, not your morality proper. You can be an honest man even under Genghis Khan or Nero, ya?

Mr. Schaeffer: Well, there’s one place where he says that only in a republican constitution can you expect—

LS: Ya. Well,⁵⁶ here is a passage⁵⁷ which we just read—whether it has something to this effect. What does he say?

Mr. Reinken:

A good constitution is not to be expected from morality, but, conversely, a good moral condition of a people is to be expected only under a good constitution.^{xv}

LS: “A good moral education,” ya? *Bildung*.⁵⁸ This is indeed a very strong remark and is probably the strongest that occurs in Kant, that the good moral education of the people would depend—and that is of course a point⁵⁹ where Hegel would say, “here!” you know, you can’t leave it this. What people know through their conscience, through their awareness of the moral law,⁶⁰ unless the man is unusually wise, [is] of very little effect. The people in general listen to their teachers, and their teachers are chiefly the religious teachers, the preachers. Now, whether preachers always teach a pure moral teaching is for Kant a question,⁶¹ you know, and this would then depend on the enlightenment of the government—say, Frederick the Great of Prussia or Joseph II of Austria,^{xvi} i.e. enlightened rulers. And this is an obvious difficulty for Kant, I do not deny that.⁶² Were you the one, Mr. Schaeffer? Ya, that is a good point.

Mr. Schaeffer: . . . the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant seems to say that if God⁶³ can only be hypothetically posited, does not exist, does this undermine the foundation of morality?

LS: Ya, but⁶⁴ as far as I know, Kant never found any difficulty in that because that was not the issue. The issue was only: Should the teaching of the people (ultimately going back to what they are taught in divinity schools), would this be, say, Lutheran orthodoxy or would this be a kind of enlightened Christianity, liberal Christianity? That would be the question. And their moral stature would increase if their preachers were enlightened Christians and not narrow orthodox Christians.⁶⁵ I do not here make any judgments on Lutheranism; I only try to restate the view as closely as possible to Kant’s own view.

Mr. Schaeffer: I am looking to the other question. I am asking, in other words, if according to Kant a belief in God is essential for leading some people to have hope in the moral—

LS: All men.⁶⁶ I mean, men act immorally if they comply with the moral law in order to be rewarded by God or in order not to be punished by God. But if they act morally, Kant says, they cannot *consistently* do that without believing in God. The belief in God and the immortality of the soul is not a condition but the necessary consequence of the respect for the moral law. That’s Kant’s point. So the existence of God is not in any way the issue.

Now, as for the fundamental question of interpretation which you implicitly raise, Mr. Schaeffer, I would give this answer as a provisional answer. This phenomenon, to which I have referred frequently in my publications and also in class, namely, that in earlier centuries heterodox thinkers concealed their fundamental deviation from the orthodox views⁶⁷ and elaborated a certain technique in doing so, what I call “persecution and the

^{xv} Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 112-113.

^{xvi} Joseph II (1741-1790), Holy Roman Emperor from 1765 until his death in 1790. Attempted many legal reforms in the style of enlightened despotism: abolishing serfdom, promoting education and religious tolerance, suppressing Catholic monastic orders, and abolishing ecclesiastical tribunals.

art of writing.”^{xvii} This I’m sure exists and is not sufficiently considered by present-day history. But it also disappeared, and it disappeared—although we have seen in our age, both in Nazi Germany and in the communist countries, quite a bit of persecution and the art of writing. But to the best of my knowledge not a single man, either in Germany or in the Eastern countries, has drawn the conclusion that this might throw some light on the literature of the past, and on a much higher literature than what is popularly produced now because there were many more centuries in the past than we have now. If you correct me, I will listen with great interest.

Mr. Schaeffer: No. I just wanted to say that—

LS: They couldn’t write on that, of course. They could not write on persecution in the art of writing without ruining themselves.

Mr. Schaeffer: Well,⁶⁸ yeah, there was one a few years in Poland when he actually could, but that is⁶⁹ no longer so.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Schaeffer: But in most of those countries—

LS: Ya, but, I mean in . . . none in purely historical studies.

Mr. Schaeffer: Well, even in historical studies they can’t.

LS: Ya. Well, they could conceivably if—especially if—that was a wicked man from the Marxist point of view . . . But be this as it may, now this has disappeared; and generally speaking, we can say its disappearance was a consequence of the French Revolution. And then as it always happens, or can happen in any case, such purely external changes, social changes, then find their expression in theoretical assertions. And now if we look at what people like Hegel, and Schleiermacher,^{xviii} the originator of modern Platonic research, what they do with this question of possible concealment—say, in Plato—shows that⁷⁰ they have simply rejected this notion. And they became the teacher[s] of many famous historians, philologists, and what have you. And the consequence is what we have today, so that if someone like poor me, says . . . as the Arabs say there are such things, he is regarded as a man who talks strange things, to use a polite expression [laughter],⁷¹ and wholly unworthy of consideration.

But⁷² you know, from a certain moment on this has changed, and this is roughly the time of Kant where the change took place. Why should, therefore, ⁷³Kant [not be] one of these more recent great men who would not use such kinds of concealment in important matters? I mean that Kant should hem and haw a bit when confronted with⁷⁴ a script of

^{xvii} Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Free Press, 1952).

^{xviii} Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), German theologian, influential in the traditions of liberal theology and Higher Criticism. See *Schleiermacher’s Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, trans. William Dobson (Cambridge: J. & J. J. Deighton, 1836).

the minister of the King of Prussia—you know⁷⁵ the censorship question, of which we will speak of next time; that is possible. That is uninteresting. I mean, in Russia, in Czarist Russia, where there was quite a bit of censorship, they had an expression: “He’s speaking using Aesopian language.”⁷⁶ Some of you may have heard that. So it was still a fact then, but this had apparently induced no historian, no scholar, to consider the possible importance of this point for literature as well.

Take one example which is relatively easy to discuss. For example, what was the freedom under the Roman Empire to criticize the Roman Empire? I mean, I am speaking now of the subject nations, and this would apply of course especially to the Greeks. I am not so sure whether a close study of Plutarch’s biographies, the *Parallels of Greeks and Romans*^{xix}, would not show a certain reserved plea of Plutarch for the superiority of the Greeks, which could not well be said.

There is a statement in Xenophon where he says, in a different time: It’s impossible at this time to say anything against the Spartans. I mean, that was⁷⁷ immediately after the end of the Peloponnesian War. These simple things which every one of us knows: there is a somewhat brutal victorious power, like the Spartans in that day and the Romans in theirs, that people will keep their mouths shut and⁷⁸ if they speak, only speak by indirection. This simple commonsensical observation is ordinarily completely disregarded, and I think⁷⁹ we are the losers . . .

But now we must return to Kant, otherwise we won’t finish our . . . now on page 113, paragraph 2. We will not read that because this has been clearly accounted for by Mr. Morgan. Here Kant answers for the first time the question why there must be states. After all, one could say [that] if we want to have perpetual peace, why do we not have a universal state—which may consist of provinces, of course, but a universal central government? And here Kant gives a very plausible answer, namely, that this would be a soulless despotism. The universal state would be a terribly despotic state. Now this makes very much sense, but I raise⁸⁰ only one question: How does Kant know it?⁸¹ Can this be known *a priori*, or is this not a reference to sound empirical observation throughout the ages? Be that as it may, Kant says here [that] nature fortunately prevents the universal state through the diversity of languages and of religions. Now religions means here of course positive religions, because *the* religion is according to Kant only one. But nature connects the nations by commerce and (as Kant, I think he also says) by the spirit of commerce.

So⁸² religion pulls one way and commerce the other, and that is the great problem of modern times. And⁸³ I mean that must not be understood in a Marxist manner, because the Marxist situation—that the economic relations are the key, are a consequence of the fact that men from a certain time on, for unknown reasons, turned toward the economic things as much more important than the things of the other world; and then, once this decision was made by ever more people, it became a fact of utmost importance which could then understandably be used as the key to all history. But⁸⁴ what is understandable is not necessarily the reason. Good.

^{xix} Plutarch, *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*.

And now we come to the next point. We turn now to the Appendix.⁸⁵ Kant begins the Appendix with the observation that there is no question regarding whether it is feasible to obey the moral law. That's clear. Thou canst because thou oughtst, and therefore there is no conflict—no legitimate conflict, that is—between morality and politics possible. What is possible all the time is of course a rebellion of immoral politicians to morality. But that is not in itself different from ordinary criminality, although these criminals cannot⁸⁶ so easily be brought to justice. But what then is the difficulty? Now let us read⁸⁷ page 117, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Politics says, "Be ye wise as serpents"; morality adds, as a limiting condition, "and guileless as doves." If these two injunctions are incompatible in a single command, then politics and morality are really in conflict; but if these two qualities ought always to be united, the thought of contrariety is absurd, and the question as to how the conflict between morals and politics is to be resolved cannot even be posed as a problem. Although the proposition, "Honesty is the best policy," implies a theory which practice unfortunately often refutes, the equally theoretical "Honesty is better than any policy" is beyond refutation and is indeed the indispensable condition of policy.^{xx}

LS: So in other words, again, no difficulty. The difficulty is caused by the practitioner—beginning in the next paragraph.⁸⁸ "But the practitioner, for whom morality is mere—"

Mr. Reinken:

Now the practical man, to whom morality is mere theory even though he concedes that it can and should be followed, ruthlessly renounces our fond hope [that it will be followed]. He does so because—^{xxi}

LS: "Ruthlessly" is too weak. Disloyally or treacherously would be a better translation.

Mr. Reinken: "He does so because he pretends to have seen in advance that man—" ^{xxii}

LS: That is, "that he can predict from the nature of man."

Mr. Reinken:

that he pretends to predict from the nature of man that he "will never will what is required for realizing the goal of perpetual peace."^{xxiii}

LS: Yes, let us stop here. So in other words, the practitioner, the immoral politician, believes he can predict—to use a word of Tacitus which was then taken over by

^{xx} Ibid., 117.

^{xxi} Ibid., 118. Brackets in original.

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Ibid.

Spinoza—that there will be vices as long as there are human beings,^{xxiv} and therefore also in particular those vices which make universal peace impossible. What Kant says, in other words, is this. These politicians—and of course [those] that are not merely, how should I say, ward heelers, but men of the greatness of Bismarck and what have you—would of course belong to the same kind of man . . . These⁸⁹ have an indefensible and absurd dogmatism. They assert something which they cannot possibly know, namely, that men will always—and especially governing men—will always act or be immoral. Yes?

Student: Well, don't they simply assert that at present men will act immorally, because their actions are taken with respect to—?

LS: Ya, but still, their present actions would be different if they would anticipate a better future. Ya?

Same Student: Well, I was wondering whether this means that Kant is asserting that it's theoretically possible, sort of, at any moment for there to be perpetual peace?

LS: Ya. Well,⁹⁰ Kant does not go sufficiently into detail, that is quite true. But look at the situation of the present time. When you come to the Cold War question and all its implications, then you are ultimately up to this point: Can you trust the other side? The practical reason[s] against trusting are overwhelming. But what Kant would say is this: if one side at least does not begin to trust in the hope—or at least because it might be possible that the others would respond, that is the point. I mean,⁹¹ I am against trusting, by the way; that is not the point, but I try to understand Kant's position because⁹² Kant's position, I would say, is the most respectable basis of what now is called the liberal approach to such matters. Most respectable. Yes?

Student: But then that's really different from the approach that one would take on the basis of a philosophy of history, which tells you that perpetual peace will come in the future under certain conditions but which would justify all sorts of war and distrust now, because—

LS: Ya, sure. Kant eventually comes up with such things, that is quite true. But⁹³ still, that if one states it in theoretical terms, Kant has a point which surely deserves consideration. Is one entitled to say with Tacitus, Spinoza and well, with all the other so-called realistic writers, that there will be vices, and especially politically destructive vices, as long as there will be human beings? You see, on the other hand, that such a jump from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom (as Marx uses it) is of course based on a Kantian foundation, as is indicated by the very terms “necessity” and “freedom.” Only Marx tries to make it as realistic⁹⁴ as possible by his doctrine of the class struggle, and the revolution, and so on. But the fundamental point is the same. We can hope and we are compelled, even—morally compelled—to hope, as Kant says. Marx would say we are rationally compelled to hope that there will be⁹⁵ a human world without vices to speak of.

^{xxiv} Tacitus, *Histories* IV 74. Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, Introduction.

As Kant makes clear in the sequel, it is true that the will of individuals is insufficient for bringing about perpetual peace. Only the general will can do this. And this means that the beginning of this salutary process will have to be made by force. That I think is stated⁹⁶ on page 118, the second paragraph, ya? “There can be no other beginning of the lawful condition we expected but that through force.” Do you have that? Ya.

Mr. Reinken:

hence in the practical execution of this idea we can count on nothing but force to establish the juridical condition—^{xxv}

LS: Ya, “on no other beginning of the legal state.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken: “on the compulsion of which public law will later be established.”^{xxvi}

LS: Ya, that is all we need. The beginning will have to be made by force⁹⁷ ya, and then there comes a point⁹⁸ on page 118, bottom.

Mr. Reinken: “It will then be said—”^{xxvii}

LS: Namely, by these nasty people. The bad guys. What will they say?

Mr. Reinken:

that he who once has power in his hands will not allow the people to prescribe laws for him; a state which once is able to stand under no external laws will not submit to the decision of other states how it should seek its rights against them.^{xxviii}

LS: Etc., etc. In other words, here where Marx is one of the opponents of Kant: no ruling class ever abdicated voluntarily. That doesn’t happen. That is an objection to Kant. No state is willing to submit its vital interests to a league of nations. And Kant goes on to say that all these objections⁹⁹ would be true if there were no freedom and moral law. And therefore it is possible that a ruling class voluntarily abdicates, that governments submit¹⁰⁰ even the decision of¹⁰¹ their vital interests to arbitration, etc., etc. Now, since this is the case, since there is freedom in the moral law, there can of course only be a very slow, cautious move in the direction of what is required by natural right. That is on page 119. And let us read the note on page 120.

Mr. Reinken:

These are permissive laws of reason. Public law laden with injustice must be allowed to stand, either until everything is of itself ripe for complete reform or until this maturity has been brought about by peaceable means;—^{xxix}

^{xxv} Ibid.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} Ibid.

^{xxviii} Ibid., 118-119.

^{xxix} Ibid., 120.

LS: Ya. No,¹⁰² he did not say that. In other words, reason permits [one] to postpone the measures conducive to universal peace under another just order, because of the reign of injustice hitherto. You cannot change these large masses overnight. But these are permissive laws of reason:¹⁰³ the condition of a public right which is tainted by injustice¹⁰⁴ until everything has matured by itself for the complete revolution, *bis zur völligen Umwälzung*. Interesting. And it would be a radical change from injustice to justice. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

for a legal constitution, even though it be right to only a low degree, is better than none at all, the anarchic condition which would result from precipitate reform. Political wisdom, therefore, will make it a duty to introduce reforms which accord with the ideal of public law. But even when nature herself produces revolutions, political wisdom will not employ them to legitimize still greater oppression.^{xxx}

LS: Namely, saying: Look, you are such wicked people, you have rebelled against your lawful sovereign. But¹⁰⁵ what will they do? They will use the revolution as a call of nature. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

On the contrary, it will use them as a call of nature for fundamental reforms to produce a lawful constitution founded upon principles of freedom, for only such a constitution is durable.^{xxxii}

LS: Yes. There was, of course, not the slightest empirical evidence at the time that such a constitution was durable. But there was quite an evidence for the durability of such unrepugnant regimes as the Roman Empire and quite a few others. Natural right requires, ultimately, a complete revolution. Kant does not mean of course a bloody revolution, but a complete revolution. Yes.

Now then Kant comes to speak of the moralizing politicians, by whom Kant understands the *real politica*, the power politics men and their maxims, which is quite interesting to read but we unfortunately do not have the time. Let us look at the note on page 123, where he says, “In the interior of every state—”

Mr. Reinken: “it,” this viciousness,

is veiled by the compulsion of civil laws, because the inclination to violence between the citizens is fettered by the stronger power of the government. This relationship not only gives a moral veneer (*causae non causae*)—^{xxxii}

LS: *Causae non causae*, meaning this: that’s¹⁰⁶ a logical error, to regard what is not the cause as the cause. *Causae non causae*, meaning: you see people in a decent society, you

^{xxx} Ibid.

^{xxxii} Ibid.

^{xxxii} Ibid., 123.

know, no crime and¹⁰⁷ no visible corruption and¹⁰⁸ [bribery], and then you say that's a moral people—which you cannot say, because it¹⁰⁹ may be mere legality in contradistinction to morality. Ya?

Mr. Reinken: . . .

a moral veneer^{xxxiii} to the whole but actually facilitates the development of the moral disposition to a direct respect for the law by placing a barrier against the outbreak of unlawful inclinations. Each person believes—^{xxxiv}

LS: See here that the development of man's moral disposition is alleviated by legality. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

Each person believes that he himself would hold the concept of law sacred and faithfully follow it provided he were sure that he could expect the same from others, and the government does in part assure him of this. Thereby a great step (though not yet a moral step) is taken toward morality—^{xxxv}

LS: “Toward morality”; toward underlined by Kant. Yes; so that's all we need. So in other words, it is by no means morally irrelevant. It is even necessary for morality, but yet it is not yet itself morality. Kant traces then the difference between him and his opponents to its fundamental principle, which is that his opponents are eudaemonists and he is a moralist strictly understood. [He] makes clear again the uncertainty of all prudential, experiential politics which is undeniable.¹¹⁰

Kant is certain, and he expresses it on page 125 in the fourth paragraph, that moral politics will lead to perpetual peace. Read the second sentence of this paragraph. “For this is peculiar to morality.”

Mr. Reinken:

For it is the peculiarity of morals, especially with respect to its principles of public law and hence in relation to a politics known *a priori*, that the less it makes conduct depend on the proposed end, i.e., the intended material or moral advantage, the more it agrees with it in general.^{xxxvi}

LS: “In general.” Ya, that's a crucial qualification. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

This is because it is the universal will given *a priori* (in a nation or in the relations among different nations) which determines the law among men, and if practice

^{xxxiii} In original: “(*Causae non causae*)”

^{xxxiv} Ibid.

^{xxxv} Ibid.

^{xxxvi} Ibid., 125-126.

consistently follows it, this will can also, by the mechanism of nature, cause the desired result and make the concept of law effective.^{xxxvii}

LS: “Can,” he says, ya? It can be the cause. In other words, there are certain doubts here whether the moral politics will in fact lead to perpetual peace. So this success of moral politics depends not on moral politics but on these tough reasons, what Kant calls “the mechanism of nature.” At the end of this whole section on page¹¹¹ [128] at the end,¹¹² Kant speaks of hope for perpetual peace, not more [than that], i.e., he cannot in any sense, of course, predict it, but he can only hope it. And he regards himself as morally obliged to hope. Yes.

And now this last section on page 129 following, we have to discuss next time because this maxim, the transcendental formula of public law, as Kant calls it—all actions related to the right of other men are unjust if the maxim of these acts is incompatible with publicity. And that is somewhat modified a bit later.¹¹³ All maxims which demand, which require publicity in order to be successful are surely just or moral. So publicity is in itself (I mean, not in the vulgar sense in which it is now used)¹¹⁴ a criterion of morality. That is a very important point: it excludes *a priori* not only Plato’s noble lie (the noble lie would be impossible if the governors would openly say “This is our noble lie” [students chuckle]), but it would also apply to such more innocent things like the point discussed in the seventeenth century quite frequently: Should the right of the people to rebellion, should this not be kept under cover most of the time and only brought forth in times where it is needed? Which Kant, as you know, rejects; and therefore he rejects the right of revolution, because you cannot always openly pronounce it. You know? Now this is a great break, I think, with earlier thought, and . . . and we should discuss it at some length, for which we do not have the time now.

I mention only one point at the end¹¹⁵ of this whole writing, page 135, the last paragraph. Read this please, Mr. Reinken.

Mr. Reinken:

If it is a duty to make real (even if only through approximation in endless progress) the state of public law, and if there is well-grounded hope that this can actually be done, then perpetual peace, as the condition that will follow what has erroneously been called ‘treaties of peace’ (but which in reality are only armistices) is not an empty idea. As the times required for equal steps of progress become, we hope, shorter and shorter, perpetual peace is a problem which, gradually working out its own solution, steadily approaches its goal.^{xxxviii}

LS:¹¹⁶ But this is no qualification¹¹⁷ of Kant’s assertion that an infinite progress is required. And as I have said more than once, perpetual peace as the goal of an infinite progress is the same as perpetual war, only, if you want to put it in the form of a diagram, [LS writes on the blackboard] we can assume a state of, how should I put it? . . .

^{xxxvii} Ibid., 126.

^{xxxviii} Ibid., 135.

Student: Well—

LS: I mean you have a state of affairs—

Same Student: . . . a very slow approach to—

LS: No, no, I want to show at first a state —

Same Student: to . . . criticism. [Laughter]

LS: I want to show first a state of complete war, ya? And then scribble in there.
[Laughter] And now a state of ever-decreasing war.

Same Student:¹¹⁸ These [refers to drawing on blackboard] would be lines of decreasing war. This is dropping, slowly. [Laughter]

LS: Well I thought— [Laughter]

Same Student: . . .

LS: . . . find a state in which there is only somewhat, and that goes for ages. And then we will find a state in which there is . . . [LS writes on the blackboard, refers to the drawing], and so on. But it will never disappear, and [laughter] since men progress, the brevity of the wars and the gravity of the wars may not preclude their savagery, you know— meaning the devastating character of the wars. So this, we will have to read it again together.

¹ Deleted “what, in Kant’s...”

² Deleted “between...”

³ Deleted “And therefore a democracy...I think...”

⁴ Deleted “That was not Kant’s...”

⁵ Deleted “is...is...”

⁶ Deleted “That...”

⁷ Deleted “let us...”

⁸ Deleted “**Reinken:** Oh. But it translates it ‘people.’ **LS:** Yeah, I am sorry.”

⁹ Deleted “**LS:** No, no. Yeah, ‘people.’ **Reinken:** ‘people.’”

¹⁰ Deleted “here Kant is quite...”

¹¹ Deleted “yes, yes.”

¹² Deleted “That is...”

¹³ Deleted “could be...”

¹⁴ Deleted “But and this is...”

¹⁵ Deleted “No...”

¹⁶ Deleted “That is...”

¹⁷ Deleted “depends on not so much...”

¹⁸ Deleted “his.”

¹⁹ Deleted “the...”

²⁰ Deleted “but.”

²¹ Deleted “Why is it...”

²² Deleted “You...”

²³ Deleted “nothing...”

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- 24 Deleted "that is this...."
25 Deleted "It requires...."
26 Deleted "And then...therefore, there is the...."
27 Deleted "Kant...."
28 Deleted "when we...what Kant here...."
29 Deleted "that there will be...."
30 Deleted "brought...."
31 Deleted "who...."
32 Deleted "that would...."
33 Deleted "these...so...."
34 Deleted "history of philosophy."
35 Deleted "And the...."
36 Deleted "I think I...."
37 Deleted "acts according to morality, let us say, which they...."
38 Deleted "habitually."
39 Deleted "in a capitalist...in a, I'm sorry."
40 Deleted "this worker."
41 Deleted "not...."
42 Deleted "well."
43 Deleted "That's...."
44 Deleted "that is one...."
45 Deleted "at least if he...."
46 Deleted "Is this not...this kind of worries."
47 Deleted "But still...I see."
48 Deleted "so...now well I hope if you will not...."
49 Deleted "But this would...."
50 Deleted "and...this is of... means, of course that Kant...."
51 Deleted "the...."
52 Deleted "such a...such an...."
53 Deleted "would haste to shock...."
54 Deleted "to believe that...."
55 Deleted "if it weren't for...."
56 Deleted "this is...."
57 Deleted "in...."
58 Deleted "ya."
59 Deleted "where Kant...."
60 Deleted "is...."
61 Deleted "And therefore there would not let...."
62 Deleted "That is...who...who...."
63 Deleted "if he can only...."
64 Deleted "this is not...."
65 Deleted "That would be the...I...."
66 Deleted "I mean, not in this way...."
67 Deleted "and applied...."
68 Deleted "this is...."
69 Deleted "not...."
70 Deleted "they do not have...."
71 Deleted "and...."
72 Deleted "it has...."
73 Moved "not be."
74 Deleted "a...merely a...of."
75 Deleted "which...."
76 Deleted "you know."
77 Deleted "after...."
78 Deleted "will...."

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- 79 Deleted "it is...."
- 80 Deleted "this one...."
- 81 Deleted "Is this...."
- 82 Deleted "that we have here then...."
- 83 Deleted "that is...."
- 84 Deleted "whether that is...."
- 85 Deleted "He begins...."
- 86 Deleted "be...."
- 87 Deleted "paragraph...."
- 88 Deleted "**Reinken**: 'The tutelary divinity of morality—' **LS**: No, no."
- 89 Deleted "are...."
- 90 Deleted "the point [LS speaks over student]...yeah, well, Kant...."
- 91 Deleted "you...."
- 92 Deleted "it is...."
- 93 Deleted "still, there is of course...."
- 94 Deleted "in...."
- 95 Deleted "a world in...."
- 96 Deleted "in...."
- 97 Deleted "And therefore, in this way...."
- 98 Deleted "which...."
- 99 Deleted "were true...."
- 100 Deleted "their...."
- 101 Deleted "their vital...submitting."
- 102 Deleted "that is too...."
- 103 Deleted "to leave this...to leave...to leave this...."
- 104 Deleted "as long...."
- 105 Deleted "they...."
- 106 Deleted "a wrong form of...."
- 107 Deleted "no tax...."
- 108 Deleted "bribe."
- 109 Deleted "may be too...."
- 110 Deleted "He...."
- 111 Deleted "228."
- 112 Deleted "he speaks...."
- 113 Deleted "That this is...in this way, that all maxims which cannot be...the maxim...all maxims which cannot be...."
- 114 Deleted "publicity is in itself."
- 115 Deleted "of the whole work...."
- 116 Deleted "So...."
- 117 Deleted "to...."
- 118 Deleted "I...this...."

Session 16: May 25, 1967

Leo Strauss:ⁱ You spoke about the conditions under which Kant wrote or published—ⁱ

Student: Yes.

LS: This piece, in 1798. Now 1797 was an important date in Prussian history because in 1797 the successor to Frederick the Great, Frederick William II, died.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: And his minister, Wöllner,ⁱⁱ was the one who tried to censor Kant. And in the moment this obnoxious minister appeared, Kant could lay the axe of this whole controversy before the public. This, I think, is of some importance. Now, as to the point why Kant presents this piece about the future of mankind in the context of a discussion with the law faculty—

Same Student: Yes.

LS: and you rightly say,² “what has this to do with the law faculty?” But it is of course not difficult to answer that question, and can you repeat your answer?

Same Student: Well, I am saying that he is talking about it in the larger context of the relationship between philosophy and law, and that he is especially concerned with educating the politician, or change on the legal level because change must come from above rather than from below.

LS: Law means here, of course, in the wide sense also public law, naturally—

Same Student: Yes.

LS: and therefore also the higher officials, including ministers.

Same Student: Yes.

LS:³ Good. And what is the conflict between the lower faculty and the law faculty, which⁴ is one of the higher faculties?

Same Student: Well, the conflict is that philosophy is not allowed, or⁵ in the German universities it is directed toward general education, and that this is not the level on which the change is to come about, and that hence—

ⁱ Strauss comments on a student’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Johann Christoph von Wöllner (1732-1800), Privy Counsellor to Frederick William II of Prussia.

LS: No. You must really start from something much more superficial and important. The philosopher teaches natural law and has nothing to do with positive law, and the law faculty teaches positive law. Now *de jure*, natural law is much higher than positive law. But *de facto*, the positive law, given by the state and invested with the whole majesty of the state, imposes itself much more, especially on the officials, high and low, than natural law which, you know, which exists so to say only in books by philosophers.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: And⁶ there are two meanings of *de jure* here. In one way, the law faculty is higher than the philosophic faculty, because the law faculty belongs to the higher and philosophy is lower. But in a deeper sense [of] *de jure*, philosophy is of course higher.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: And the controversy with the law faculty was not so serious as that with theology, because⁷ if you would look at the German edition, you would see that the discussion with the theology faculty is more than half of the whole work. Good.

Yes, now you made this interesting point that Kant might be himself a diviner in the sense that he⁸ defines it there: that he can divine the future because he brings it about, or contributes to its coming about by his publications. That is a very interesting suggestion⁹ but this leads to certain difficulties. The philosophers must teach *the* natural law—and which includes perpetual peace as Kant understands it—and they are under an obligation to so not only because of their conscience, but also because they are paid for doing that, ya? That is their function.¹⁰ And so the realization of something like the millennium depends on the academic freedom, as we say, especially of the philosophic faculty and more particularly of the department of philosophy, ya?¹¹ In that time it made sense because philosophy at that time had an enormous influence in Germany, among the educated classes, of course.

But¹² why does the state permit that? After all, the Prussian state was very strong, you know—strong army and police force, and he could easily have suppressed academic freedom. An older, an earlier German philosopher, not of the rank of Kant, Christian Wolff, taught Leibnitzian philosophy in a Prussian university. And this was the famous king who originated, really, the Prussian army, later on used with so great success by Frederick the Great. And this father of Frederick the Great didn't like Wolff's philosophy and therefore he said: He has to stop—not only his lectures, but to leave the Prussian state at once, otherwise he will be hanged. So that can be done. And then, of course, how can the philosopher influence the high officials, including ministers, if they are deprived of that freedom? Now incidentally, as soon as Frederick the Great succeeded, he called Wolff back, and Wolff became a baron, and all the dignities which could be heaped upon him very kindly.¹³ So let us come back to the key point. Why does the state permit that?

Same Student: I—

LS: And does it permit a philosophic faculty which follows only *the* truth, regardless of what the higher faculties say?

Same Student: Well, I would say that¹⁴ it is in the self-interest of the government not to suppress philosophy completely. And this is—

LS: Why not? I mean, there are various ways of suppressing philosophy. It can be done . . . under this very name, and then of course it¹⁵ would shock. But it can be done in an indirect way, you know, by giving premiums to the philosophy professors who behave and to understand hints from above. And those who don't—and depriving the others of such privileges.

No,¹⁶ but what is the precise reason why the state needs philosophy? Now¹⁷ the philosophic faculty included at that time, incidentally, also mathematics and natural science. I try to help you towards a present-day problem. What I have in mind is the fact, the expectation of many people that in our age, where science and technology are so terribly important, even the most tyrannical or despotic state must permit science. You know?¹⁸ And once you permit freedom there, for the atomic scientists, you must permit it to all other cultivators of intelligence. Is this a valid reasoning?

Student: Well, in principle, if the government thinks that other thought may be dangerous, you could, in principle allow sciences and stop, say, philosophy, which is in fact what happens in the communist countries today.

LS: Exactly.

Same Student: But¹⁹ I think what it comes down to is the question of theory and practice.²⁰

LS:²¹ Ya, sure, but we are speaking now, trying to see the situation as it appears from the point of view of the mere practitioner who is in no way impressed by the greatness of truth and right, but only of keeping the state strong.

Mr. Reinken: Perhaps it has failed to draw the fact/value distinction and doesn't know how to separate the wheat of mathematics [laughter] from [the] chaff of moral philosophy.

LS: Yes, that is—

Mr. Reinken: And though the chaff it is bound to get.

LS: Now that is—in other words, there was some truth in that, in this expectation in Kant's time, and still more perhaps in Bacon's time, where the whole thing started.²² In Bacon's time philosophy and science were still the same thing, and therefore a man of science was supposed to be also a sage²³; and therefore no wisdom would prevent from becoming a tool of mere power. But once you have this situation where science is strictly

separated from philosophy and [is] therefore in a radical sense a technique rather than wisdom, then of course,²⁴ by paying them properly and by giving them cars and dachas (if that's the right pronunciation) and other amenities, you can have wonderful atomic scientists who will not have the slightest interest in taking issue with the government. I mean, they may be compelled to introduce Einstein's relativity theory (although there was originally a prohibition against that), but this can be done in technical contexts where the masses, the population wouldn't notice anything. And that's easy. So there is a certain difficulty here.

Now what Kant also implies (which might have perhaps contributed to the millennium) is that Kant takes it for granted that the law faculties will be archreactionaries,²⁵ which is now no more. On the contrary, I would say the Supreme Court, even the Supreme Court is now the byword of liberalism in this country. But in former times they teach the positive law [LS taps on the table] and are therefore immune, or claim to be immune, to philosophy.

A final point, which is not about your paper. I have to apologize to Miss . . . by my remark last time about Mr. Freidrich. I have been told that you come from Radcliffe.

Student: Yes.

LS: And so that I think you must have some loyalties [laughter] to Harvard. And I should be very sorry [laughter] if I had—

Same Student: No, I actually enjoyed the comment very much. [Laughter]

LS: Well, I hope this doesn't mean that you are disloyal. Good. Now before we turn to²⁶ this writing now—yes, we had reached a point in *Perpetual Peace*,²⁷ page 129, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: Appendix II, and:

Having set aside everything empirical in the concept of civil or international law (such as the wickedness in human nature which necessitates coercion), we can call the following proposition the transcendental formula of public law: "All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity."

This principle is to be regarded not merely as ethical (as belonging to the doctrine of virtue) but also as juridical (concerning the right of man). A maxim which I cannot divulge without defeating my own purpose must be kept secret if it is to succeed; and, if I cannot publicly avow it without inevitably exciting universal opposition to my project, the necessary and universal opposition which can be foreseen *a priori* is due only to the injustice with which the maxim threatens everyone. This principle is, furthermore, only negative, i.e., it only serves for the recognition of what

is not just to others. Like an axiom, it is indemonstrably certain and, as will be seen in the following examples of public law, easily applied.ⁱⁱⁱ

LS: Ya. Now the distinction which Kant makes here between ethical and juridical is an intramoral distinction, i.e. juridical does not mean positive law. The whole realm of morality as Kant understands it consists of two parts: of a part directed, which he calls²⁸ the doctrine of virtue; and another which he calls doctrine of right. The difference is this: that only²⁹ what pertains to the rights of man is by its nature in *need* of coercion; whereas,³⁰ to take a simple example, veracity, which belongs to virtue, there is no right of the government to coerce people to³¹ always say the truth—except in special cases like before law courts; that would be a different situation. But generally speaking, that³² cannot be a legal crime. So this is an intramoral distinction, contrary to what it might seem to mean today.

But now the key point: “All actions relating to the right of other men are unjust if their maxim is not consistent with publicity.” Now this is of course a crucial statement and a landmark in a way, as you see particularly when you think of Plato’s famous noble lie, and taking this also as more than a casual remark of Plato in one of his dialogues but as presenting a principle that the higher may, for the benefit of the subjects, lie to them . . . popular examples, in a way, the physician is your ruler. He doesn’t strictly speaking command you, but he gives you orders of sorts. And in many cases physicians think that they should not tell the patient the truth about his condition because that might worsen the condition. But the other example, military commanders who may tell their troops that they will be relieved shortly so that they fight on although they know they are lost, but it is of crucial importance that this enemy be kept there for the time being. One would not—at least in former times, no one thought of morally condemning such a commander, assuming his judgment was sound.

So here³³ in Kant we have the diametrically opposed view: publicity, compatibility with publicity, or even need for publicity as a criterion for morality and rightness.

Now I find a remark in Hobbes’s *Leviathan* which I believe is of some importance or some help for understanding our passages. This occurs in chapter 15 of the *Leviathan*, at the end of Hobbes’s discussion of natural law, and where he has a section with the heading “Justice not contrary to reason.” And it begins in this remarkable way:

The Foole hath sayd in his heart, there is no such thing as Justice; and sometimes also with his tongue, seriously alleaging, that every man’s conservation, and contentment, being committed to his own care, there could be no reason, why every man might not do what he thought conduced thereunto: and therefore also to make, or not make; keep, or not keep Covenants, was not against Reason when it conduced to ones benefit. He does not therein deny, that there be Covenants; and that they are sometimes broken, sometimes kept; and that such breach of them may be called Injustice, and the observance of them Justice: but he questioneth,

ⁱⁱⁱ Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 129.

whether Injustice, taking away the feare of God, (for the same Foole hath said in his heart there is no God,) may not sometimes stand with that Reason, which dictates to every man his own good—^{iv} [and so on—LS]

The Kingdome of God is gotten by violence: but what if it could be gotten by unjust violence? were it against Reason so to get it, when it is impossible to receive hurt by it? and if it be not against Reason, it is not against Justice . . . From such reasoning as this, Successful wickednesse hath obtained the name of Vertue: and some that in all other things have disallowed the violation of Faith; yet have allowed it, when it is for the getting of a Kingdome. And the Heathen that believed, that *Saturn* was deposed by his son *Jupiter*, believed neverthelesse³⁴ the same *Jupiter* to be the avenger of Injustice: Somewhat like to a piece of Law in Coke's *Commentaries on Littleton*; where he sayes, If the right Heire of the Crown be attainted of Treason, yet the Crown shall descend to him, and in the same moment³⁵ the Atteynder be voyd: From which instances a man will be very prone to inferre; that when the Heire apparent of a Kingdome, shall kill him that is in possession, though his father; you may call it Injustice, or by what other name you will; yet it can never be against Reason, seeing all the voluntary actions of men tend to the benefit of themselves; and those actions are most Reasonable, that conduce most to their ends. [Laughter] This specious reasoning is neverthelesse false.^v

And then, in the following argument, the following point occurs:

In a condition of Warre, wherein every man to every man, for want of a common Power to keep them all in awe, is an Enemy, there is no man [who] can hope by his own strength, or wit, to defend himselfe from destruction, without the help of Confederates; where every one expects the same defense by the Confederation, that anyone else does: and therefore he which declares he thinks it reason to deceive those that help him, can in reason expect no other means of safety, than what can be had from his own single Power. He therefore that breaketh his Covenant, and consequently declareth that he thinks he may with reason do so, cannot be received into any Society.^{vi}

You see what Hobbes tacitly does: he applies the principle of publicity. This same crook, if he did not *declare* what he says, might get away with breach of promise or treason. But if he declares it, then of course every hand will be against him. This is very interesting and shows you how moral Hobbes was.

Now in order to see this properly, we have to look³⁶ at Hobbes's ancient counterparts—the conventionalists, they are called, the people who say justice is only by convention,

^{iv} Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 15.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid., chap. 15.

which in a way is also Hobbes's teaching. But it is a bit more subtle in him because Hobbes also says [that] where there is no government, there is no justice nor injustice. Now justice is entirely conventional.³⁷ I mean the facts, the variety of customs and laws in different countries is frequently appealed to in this connection, but that is not the core of the matter. The core is this consideration: in the case of other virtues or vices, the vices are punished by nature. Take the simple example: if you overeat, you will get stomach troubles or something else. But³⁸ what about injustice, unjust acts: Are they bad for you, for your selfish interests? The answer is: Only if they are detected. If someone commits a most terrible crime and if it is not detected, as it happens frequently, then he can become³⁹ a pillar of society, and what have you. And this is the point. But⁴⁰ non-detection is irrelevant in the case of overeating, obviously, and therefore this is truly natural. The other requires convention and is not truly natural.⁴¹

This problem is beautifully presented in the second book of Plato's *Republic*, the ring of Gyges. If a man⁴² has a ring of Gyges which makes him invisible, then he can do all kinds of crimes with impunity. I trust you all have read this once in your lives. It is a very powerful statement. And you can become king, as this fellow did—of whom Plato,⁴³ or Glaucon rather, speaks. But the ring of Gyges or any other gadget of this kind would not prevent him from a stomach ache [students chuckle] if he eats the wrong things or so on. Good.

Now this point which⁴⁴ surely must be taken into consideration: that there is a difference between things which⁴⁵ carry their punishment⁴⁶ by nature, and those which carry their punishment, as far as we can observe empirically, only when just men reign. That is Spinoza's formulation—that is, justice will be found only where just men reign. That is important, this consideration.

And Hobbes very interestingly, by making it a condition of rationality that you can declare your maxim, avoids or refutes conventionalism. Whether Hobbes, given his hedonistic starting point, has a right to do so is a question which we cannot now settle. And then if he is not justified, it is still a great credit to his character, which is not at all to be despised. But still, that is the clearest passage prior to Kant known to me where this principle of publicity is stated. And therefore, that Hobbes has a natural law teaching, however thin it may appear to us in the light of the older natural law teaching, it is connected with this. Hobbes⁴⁷ speaks of natural laws, has an oration of them (of 19 or how many there are), and this is connected with this difference. I thought that I should draw your attention to this point.

Now in the same context there is another point.⁴⁸ Where were we now? On page 130. Ya, the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

In the law of the state^{vii} or domestic law, there is a question which many hold to be difficult to answer, yet it is easily solved by the transcendental principle of publicity. The question is: "Is rebellion a legitimate means for

^{vii} In original: "*ius civitatis*")

a people to employ in throwing off the yoke of an alleged tyrant “(not tyrant in title, but by his acting so)?”^{viii} The rights of the people are injured; no injustice befalls the tyrant when he is deposed. There can be no doubt on this point. Nevertheless, it is in the highest degree illegitimate for the subjects to seek their rights in this way. If they fail in the struggle and are then subjected to severest punishment, they cannot complain about injustice any more than the tyrant could if they had succeeded.^{ix}

LS: Ya. Now Kant shows then in the sequel [that] the immorality of revolution, as we say, is based on the fact, or is shown by the fact, that the principle, namely, the right of resistance to tyranny cannot be publicly avowed. And therefore the proceedings leading up to the rising must be secret or conspiratorial, immoral. These people must of course lie. If, say, an SS man [is] around and asks them: Why do you all go to this particular bar or restaurant? and—pardon?

Mr. Reinken: The hamburgers are good. [Laughter]

LS: Exactly.⁴⁹ They must lie, because that’s not the reason why they go. [Students chuckle] Good. Now the point with which I am concerned now is this:⁵⁰ the question is here stated by Kant regarding the throwing off the yoke of an alleged tyrant. But Kant qualifies this by adding in parentheses a Latin expression: “a tyrant not by title but by the exercise.” Now this is an old Scholastic distinction: the tyrant, on the ground of defect of title, being a usurper. And he of course has no right whatever to his position because he is like a thief; [he] has no right to his position. But a legitimate ruler, say, the heir to a king, can exercise his legitimate rule in a beastly manner, in a tyrannical manner, and then he is a tyrant with respect to the exercise.

Now what Kant says here: “I am speaking only of a rising against a legitimate ruler who rules tyrannically.” He thus seems to imply that a rising against a mere usurper would be a different story, at least. That’s interesting. I never have been aware of [or] observed this implication. I thought we should mention it. Now let us turn to our writing. Yes.

Mr. Reinken: It might have been politic when Prussia was at war with Napoleon, or the only decent thing to say, to suggest that tyrants should be gotten rid of.

LS:⁵¹ Ya, there were some irregularities until Napoleon, but after he had married the daughter of the Austrian emperor, you know, you would have to question her title too. And this is very hard in practice, just as in the case of Hitler.⁵² I mean, there is a very radical Kantian today in Germany, Ebbinghaus^x is his name, ⁵³who was always anti-Nazi and survived somehow the Hitler time. And he was absolutely opposed to all resistance, being a strict Kantian, and he never brought up the question of whether⁵⁴ [Hitler] was a tyrant on account of defective title. You know, there were some funny goings on with the burning down of the Reichstag and so, but still, the overall picture was that Hitler had

^{viii} In original: “(*nontitulo, sed exercitio talis*)”

^{ix} Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 130.

^x Julius Ebbinghaus (1885-1981).

been called to the chancellorship by the president of the Reich. And then the formal legality, at least apparently, existed. You know,⁵⁵ I think one must be quite clumsy, I believe, if one cannot preserve some appearance of formal legality. Yes. Good.

Now let us come to⁵⁶ the writing which we discuss today, *Whether the Human Race is in a⁵⁷ Steady Progress toward the Better*. Now what is the issue? Kant makes this the beginning: the issue is the fate of the human race, not of the individuals. You know, we have discussed it another way at length. So the fate of the individuals cannot be predicted, because of the freedom of each, and also because there is no essential connection between morality, and happiness or misery in this life. So it only concerns the fate of the human race. And Kant speaks, then, in the next paragraph.⁵⁸ What does one wish, how can one know?

Mr. Reinken:

As a divinatory historical narrative of the thing imminent in future time, consequently as a possible representation *a priori* of events which are supposed to happen then. But how is a history *a priori* possible? Answer: if the diviner himself creates and contrives the events which he announces in advance.^{xi}

LS: Ya. So that is the history *a priori* here with a slight double meaning. *A priori*: before it happens,⁵⁹ in advance of its happening, but be of course also not empirical.

Why can there not be a⁶⁰ [prediction] of the future on the basis of known natural laws as in the case of astronomy, to which Kant referred before? Why is this not possible? Think of Marx.⁶¹ Marx doesn't claim that his predictions are *a priori*. To the contrary, he claims that it is based on the most comprehensive induction from known facts.

Mr. Reinken: Well, one might raise the argument about freedom, but he himself in an earlier paper dismissed the idea that individual freedom precluded statistical regularities.

LS: Yes, that is quite true.

Student: Purely empirically, there is no causality, even. And there is no way to predict at all, there's no necessity at all.

LS: No. That is not Kant's view of empirical.

Same Student: Well, he follows Hume in this particular thing, that the categories are a—

LS: Kant understands by experience as distinguished from mere sense data, something absolutely ruled by the principle of causality.

Same Student: Causality itself is *a priori*, it's not—

^{xi} Kant, *An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?*, 137.

LS: The *principle* of causality, but not the particularities.⁶² For example, you know that any law regarding, say, electricity is of course based on observation. But there must be a rule of regular conduct of possible objects of experience, that is the *a priori* . . . Let us keep this question in mind, why Kant, apparently at least, predicts strictly *a priori*.⁶³ And the answer which he gives is the point⁶⁴ [of] which Mrs. . . .⁶⁵ made so much, that is possible if the diviner himself makes the events which he predicts.

And then he gives as the three examples the Jewish prophets (whom he identifies then with the priests in this context; I mean, that is a very crude notion based on Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*), the practical politicians, and finally the clergymen with their predicting the coming of the anti-Christ. I think we do not have to read that.

And then⁶⁶ he clarifies the question by stating the alternatives. There are three possibilities regarding the future of mankind: terrorism (as Kant calls it); eudaemonism; and abderatism. Why does he call it abderatism?

Mr. Reinken: . . . reference to Democritus.

LS: Not to Democritus, but to his countrymen, the Abderites, the citizens of Abdera. There are such stories in all countries. In Germany, *Schildbürger*. What are they in England? How are they called in England? You know, the crazy people who do everything the wrong way. Is there not an English town which has this reputation, that the inhabitants are all, in a nice way, mad?

Student: . . .⁶⁷

LS: In Scotland?

Student: In Scotland, the wise set out on a boat . . .

LS: I see, thank you very much. It's no longer used, is it?

Student: Yeah, but why did the . . . set out on a boat? . . . but . . . New York . . .

LS: I see. In Germany this was very well known, called the *Schildbürger*, a city called Schildberg. For example, they built a town hall and forgot to have windows, so it was entirely dark. And then they brought the light in in bags [students chuckle], you know—so and other bright conceits, ya. So in other words: fools. Good.

Now the terroristic notion of the history of man is that it is getting worse and worse. The anti-Christ's . . . Now what about the second, the eudaemonistic? On page 140, paragraph 2.

Mr. Reinken:

It may always be conceded that the proportion of good and evil elements inherent in our predisposition remains constant and can neither be

augmented nor diminished in the same individual; how then should the quantity of good in our predisposition increase? For that would happen only through the freedom of the subject, for which purpose the subject would in turn require a greater reservoir of good that it now possesses. The effects cannot surpass the power of the efficient cause; thus the quantity of good mixed in man with the evil cannot exceed a certain measure beyond which it would be able to work its way up and thus ever proceed toward the better. Eudaemonism, with its sanguine hopes, therefore, appears to be untenable and to promise little in a prophetic history of humanity in favor of progress endlessly broadening its course toward the good.^{xii}

LS: So that is strange. Kant does not state here the case for eudaemonism but only the case against it. Now this is intelligible, because what he calls now, very strangely, eudaemonism is the position which he himself adopts. Now ordinarily Kant rejects eudaemonism as a principle, but he happens to call this position here “eudaemonism.” And now we come to number three.

Mr. Reinken: “*Concerning the abderitic hypothesis of the human race for the predetermination of its history.*”^{xiii}

LS: It is the only one which he calls a hypothesis, of the three. In other words, to make clear that this is really the commonsensical view, as you will see. And what Kant wants to point out by this very title is that this commonsensical view is based on a hypothesis and by no means self-evident. Now read.

Mr. Reinken:

This opinion may well have the majority of voices on its side. Bustling folly is the character of our species: people hastily set off on the path of the good, but do not persevere steadfastly upon it; indeed, in order to avoid being bound to a single goal, even if only for the sake of variety they reverse the plan of progress, build in order to demolish, and impose upon themselves the hopeless effort of rolling the stone of Sisypheus uphill in order to let it roll back down again. The principle of evil in the natural predisposition of the human race, therefore, does not seem to be amalgamated (blended) here with that of the good, but each principle appears rather to be neutralized by the other. Inertia (which is called here stagnation) would be the result of this. It is a vain affair to have good so alternate with evil that the whole traffic of our species with itself on this globe would have to be considered as a mere farcical comedy, for this can endow our species with no greater value in the eyes of reason than that which other animal species possess, species which carry on this game with fewer costs and without expenditure of thought.^{xiv}

^{xii} Ibid., 140.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid., 140-141.

LS: That is an allusion to Kant's criticism of abderatism. As I stated on an earlier occasion, what Kant calls here "abderatism" was the old view: ups and downs, no definite movement.⁶⁸ No final movement towards an extreme evil nor final movement toward a perfect good, but as far as the fates of kingdoms, empires and peoples is concerned, ups and downs.

Kant indicates here his criticism at the end: the dignity of man, which he owes to the moral disposition in him, makes it necessary to look at the human species with other eyes than upon other species. But this is of course not necessarily true. This application to the philosophy of history is not necessarily valid, because this can very well be provided for and was provided for by immortality of the soul, which was denied to the brutes ordinarily. So this is not sufficient. Now Kant⁶⁹ will now try to reach a decision. Let us read the heading of the next section.

Mr. Reinken: "The problem of progress is not to be resolved directly through experience."^{xv}

LS: Ya.⁷⁰ That⁷¹ of course was not at the time the view of everybody. Think of Kant's famous contemporaries, Turgot,^{xvi} Condorcet^{xvii}—you know, the men who elaborated a progressive scheme allegedly on the basis of observation.⁷² The famous pictures are often drawn: the Dark Ages . . . and then the superstitious Turk conquered Constantinople. And this is in a way the peak of darkness, and yet this leads to the wandering of the Greek scholars to Italy, the Renaissance and humanism. And then this catches on north of the Alps, in France and in Germany and so on, and England too, and then you have the Reformation. And then you have the great glories: Bacon, Descartes, and Newton. And now in our age we have Buffon^{xviii} and some other great men. And see, the punishments become more humane, and also other things; so there is empirical proof. But⁷³ what is the reason why it cannot be proven by experience?

Mr. Reinken:

Even if we felt that the human race, considered as a whole, was to be conceived as progressing and proceeding forward for however long a time, still no one can guarantee that now, this very moment, with regard to the physical disposition of our species, the epoch of its decline would not be liable to occur; and inversely, if it is moving backwards, and in an accelerated fall into baseness, a person may not despair even then of encountering a juncture, a turning point,⁷⁴ where the moral predisposition in our race would be able to turn anew toward the better.^{xix}

LS: So in other words, even granted⁷⁵ that this story was so true as told by the men of the Enlightenment, from the Renaissance up to the, say, 1770s, how do you know that there

^{xv} Ibid., 141. In original, this sentence is in all capital letters.

^{xvi} Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune (1727-1781), French economist.

^{xvii} Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), French philosopher and mathematician.

^{xviii} Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), French naturalist.

^{xix} Ibid.

will not be another collapse—as Voltaire, for example, took it for granted that every period of great culture . . . of the mind would be followed by an epoch of decline. This cannot be made out empirically. But—yes?

Student: Well, doesn't Kant suggest earlier, as was said, that you can predict the behavior of the race, for instance, through population statistics and so forth?

LS: Yes, such things, but even here⁷⁶ you have to make some qualifications: for example, so and so many births, so and so many deaths, so and so many marriages, assuming that there will be no Black Death, ya? Assuming that there will not be great earthquakes in a country particularly exposed to earthquakes, and so on and so on. This is possible within limits. But here this progress, the basis we have here, is the experience of progress. Now according to the then-prevailing view, there were two such epochs: one in Greece,⁷⁷ including⁷⁸ much of Hellenistic and Roman times (that doesn't make any difference now); and then the⁷⁹ Dark Ages, Middle Ages. And then again a new beginning in the Renaissance, and leading up to the eighteenth century.

But this would, at best, show some kind of cycles. It wouldn't prove on the whole *linear* movement of progress.

Same Student: Is Kant's—

LS:⁸⁰ You see,⁸¹ in the mortality tables, that had nothing to do with the question of progress, you know? That⁸² showed only that there was an amazing regularity where no one had thought that it would be expressible in numerical terms. That was Quetelet, also in the middle of the eighteenth century. That has nothing to do with our question.⁸³ But Kant goes on in the next section.

Mr. Reinken:

Yet the prophetic history of the human race must be connected to some experience.^{xx}

There must be some experience in the human race which, as an event, points to the disposition and capacity of the human race to be the cause of its own advance toward the better, and (since this should be the act of a being endowed with freedom), toward the human race as being the author of this advance. But from a given cause an event as an effect can be predicted [only] if the circumstances prevail which contribute to it. That these conditions must come to pass sometime or other can, of course, be predicted in general, as in the calculation of probability in games of chance; but that prediction cannot enable us to know whether what is predicted is to happen in my life and I am to have the experience of it. Therefore, an event must be sought which points to the existence of such a cause and to its effectiveness in the human race, undetermined with regard to time, and which would allow progress toward the better to be concluded

^{xx} In original: the sentence is in all capital letters.

as an inevitable consequence. This conclusion then could also be extended to the history of the past (that it has always been in progress) in such a way that that event would have to be considered not itself as the cause of history, but only as an intimation, an historical sign [Well, Latin words—R]⁸⁴ (of a reminder, signpost, prognosticator)^{xxi} demonstrating the tendency of the human race viewed in its entirety, that is, seen not as [a sum of] individuals (for that would yield an interminable enumeration and computation), but rather as divided into nations and states (as it is encountered on earth).^{xxii}

LS: Yes.⁸⁵ So some experience is necessary to appear, in order to make it credible that there will be such a progress. And this experience is stated by Kant in the next paragraph. Now we cannot read the whole, but Mrs. . . ., you repeat it. What is that experience which proves that there is an inclination toward the good in man, in the politically relevant sense?

Student:⁸⁶ It's not, as I said, the experience of the French Revolution itself, but the ideal⁸⁷ which caused it and the reaction⁸⁸. By that I mean disinterested and universal sympathy to the Revolution.

LS: Outside of France.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: And especially in Germany.

Same Student: Yes.

LS: Ya. So in other words, the fact that so many people who did not expect the French, of course, to make the Revolution—one could say made it with a view to the betterment of their own situation; and that wouldn't prove a moral inclination, it simply would prove that they were selfish, and⁸⁹ for which we do not know any special rule according to Kant. But here we see people who have nothing to do with France and who are subject to *their* sovereign, say, the King of Prussia, and they will never derive any benefit from the French Revolution, and it happens as it were on another planet. And then when they see it,⁹⁰ just as when we see over the TV how another cattle rustler is caught by Matt Dillon, we disinterestedly enjoy that, and that shows that we are fundamentally good guys. [Laughter]

Now what do you say to this Kantian argument?

Same Student: Pardon?

^{xxi} In original: “(*signum rememorativum, demonstrativum, prognostikon*)”

^{xxii} Ibid., 142-143. Brackets in original.

LS: What do you say to Kant's argument? Does it prove that these Germans, especially educated Germans and more particularly professors and writers,⁹¹ showed a perfectly pure, disinterested—

Same Student: I would say the worst—I mean, Kant himself was waiting for his newspaper every morning, and, you know—

LS: Ya, this shows only his interest . . . his concern, but it doesn't show that it had something to do with his desire to better his own condition.

Same Student: Well, I would say that insofar as it was the people such as Kant that were disinterested in and excited about this, that they were perhaps more interested or had more to gain.

LS: Ya, but in the case of men like Kant,⁹² one cannot look into men's hearts, but we have sufficient evidence from contemporaries, the higher, educated classes liked less and less to be a fundamentally half-feudal order, where the mere fact that they were not of noble origin led to their being treated as second-class citizens. Now I would say the desire to become a first-class citizen⁹³ is [a] healthy desire, but it is also not unselfish, by no . . . And in addition,⁹⁴ there were quite a few Germans at the time who went to Paris, and a part of Germany was already liberated by the French Revolutionary armies, you know?

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: The Peace of Basle.^{xxiii} When was that—now, that was 1797?⁹⁵ I do not know. At any rate, you can sympathize with something ⁹⁶even if you have not the slightest chance that this will be of benefit to you and yours, but out of a common social position. I mean these rudiments which are now told innocent children I believe in the second year, you know, that there are such things like social groups, classes or whatever they are called. This would be sufficient to question Kant's—yes?

Mr. Reinken: A prehistorical argument to undermine and strengthen your position: that the⁹⁷ quasi-feudal order that existed in Germany at the time of the petty princes having become sovereigns had been a deliberate Frenchifying, and it had in particular depressed the status of burghers. The free cities were not doing as well, and the . . . was squeezing everybody out to build himself his own Versailles, complete with French . . . So when they saw the real Versailles go down under the boots of . . .

LS: Yes. And you don't forget these famous things which are well known in this country. The Hessians, for example, who sold their soldiers to the British for fighting the American colonists⁹⁸, and other German princes did the same. It was a rather atrocious thing, as Kant himself of course has stated. And Germany was to some extent ripe for the revolution, but thanks or owing to certain complications, it didn't come out in Germany until after the Second World War. That was the first time that liberal democratic

^{xxiii} Three peace treaties signed between revolutionary France and her enemies in 1795.

Germany was victorious, thanks to Adenauer,^{xxiv} in the first place. Yes. So this is not a very powerful argument, but it seemed to be very good to Kant.

And now let us see the mechanism of that. Then he speaks in the next section of the divinatory history of mankind after having spoken of the—well, although not explicitly, of the French Revolution, but he means this. If you take the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Now I claim to be able to predict to the human race—even without prophetic insight—according to the aspects and omens of our day, the attainment of this goal [i.e., republican constitutions everywhere—R] That is, I predict its progress toward the better which, from now on, turns out to be no longer completely retrogressive. For such a phenomenon in human history *is not to be forgotten*, because it has revealed a tendency and—^{xxv}

LS: Ya,⁹⁹ literally translated:¹⁰⁰ “becomes nevermore forgotten.” How shall we . . . “It will nevermore be forgotten.” “Be nevermore forgotten.”

Mr. Reinken: “Will not be forgotten.”

LS: No, “nevermore!” [Laughter]

Mr. Reinken: “Nevermore.”

LS: Ya, and that is underlined by Kant . . . underlined. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

because it has revealed a tendency and faculty in human nature for improvement such that no politician, affecting wisdom, might have conjured out of the course of things hitherto existing, and one which nature and freedom alone, united in the human race in conformity with inner principles of right, could have promised. But so far as time is concerned, it can promise this only indefinitely and as a contingent event.^{xxvi}

LS: Ya, so the key sentence here is, the point is¹⁰¹ the words which Kant underlined: “This can never be forgotten.” That means reaction might win out again, but the fact that such a revolution—based on principles, not just¹⁰² [a] popular rising because of famine or oppression¹⁰³—this can no longer be forgotten and¹⁰⁴ this spectacle will be reenacted, hopefully in less bloody form, in the future. That is a decisive point.

And¹⁰⁵ this is indeed a premise of the belief in progress: that there is no oblivion. Because if every generation learns something or does something which had never been learned or done before, yet at the price of forgetting certain things which an earlier generation knew,

^{xxiv} Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), Chancellor of Germany from 1949-1963.

^{xxv} Ibid., 147.

^{xxvi} Ibid.

then you cannot simply speak of progress. And¹⁰⁶ therefore, from the point of view of progressivism one must say [that] a progressivism which is not concerned with a preservation of the traditions out of which it grew is a very foolish progressivism, because¹⁰⁷ people will forget that which made possible the things of which they are so proud.

Now the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

But even if the end viewed in connection with this event should not now be attained, even if the revolution or reform of a national constitution should finally miscarry, or, after some time had elapsed, everything should relapse into its former rut (as politicians now predict), that philosophical prophesy still would lose nothing of its force. For that event is too important, too much interwoven with the interest of humanity, and its influence too widely propagated in all areas of the world to not be recalled on any favorable occasion by the nations which would then be roused to a repetition of new efforts of this kind; because then, in an affair so important for humanity, the intended constitution, at a certain time, must finally attain that constancy which instruction by repeated experience suffices to establish in the minds of all men.^{xxvii}

LS: You see the “must”: “Must achieve it.” In other words, here there is a full determinist. Because certain necessary causes brought about the revolution, and this revolution fails in the end. But it cannot be forgotten. This memory is a causal factor in whatever happens later. And because it is not forgotten, the mistakes of the revolutionaries are also not forgotten, and they will improve their policy for the next time and so on and so on.

But in the next paragraph Kant makes clear, however, there is one point for which he cannot vouch, namely, that there might not be an end to the human race prior to the establishment of the just society. In other words,¹⁰⁸ the entropy might bring the whole thing to an end, which is an interesting admission.

Let us turn to page 150 in the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The Idea of a constitution in harmony with the natural right of man, one namely in which the citizens obedient to the law, besides being united, ought also to be legislative, lies at the basis of all political forms; and the body politic which, conceived in conformity to it by virtue of pure concepts of reason, signifies a Platonic Ideal, the noumenal republic,^{xxviii} is not an empty chimera, but rather the eternal norm for all civil organization in general, and averts all war. A civil society organized conformably to

^{xxvii} Ibid.

^{xxviii} In original: “(*respublica noumenon*)”

this ideal is the representation of it in agreement with the laws of freedom by means of an example in our experience, the phenomenal republic,^{xxix} and can only be painfully acquired after multifarious hostilities and wars; but its constitution, once won on a large scale, is qualified as the best among all others to banish war, the destroyer of everything good. Consequently, it is a duty to enter into such a system of government, but it is provisionally the duty of the monarchs, if they rule as autocrats, to govern in a republican (not democratic) way, that is, to treat the people according to principles which are commensurate with the spirit of libertarian laws (as a nation of mature understanding would prescribe them for itself), although they would not be literally canvassed for their consent.^{xxx}

LS: I know ¹⁰⁹only that Kant admits here that many, many wars are still needed to bring about the happy condition of perpetual peace,¹¹⁰ which does not surprise us too much, I believe.

And in the sequel, Kant makes clear¹¹¹ what can happen, will, as we have seen this last time, a progress in legality, i.e., the external actions of men will become better, but that doesn't mean that the intention, the morality itself, will progress, because this has nothing to do with any causality.¹¹² Towards the end, there Kant makes clear what infinite progress towards perpetual peace means.

Mr. Reinken:

for that which can be expected and exacted from *men* in this area toward the advancement of this aim, we can anticipate only a negative wisdom, namely, that they will see themselves compelled to render the greatest obstacle to morality—that is to say war, which constantly retards this advancement—firstly by degrees more humane and then rarer, and finally to renounce offensive war altogether, in order to enter upon a constitution which by its nature and without loss of power is founded on genuine principles of right, and which can persistently progress toward the better.^{xxxi}

LS:¹¹³ Here Kant makes clear what this infinite progress toward perpetual peace means. There are certain first steps to make war more humane, meaning decent treatment of prisoners of war and women and children should get out, and so on. That's number one. The Geneva Convention, and similar things; and then more rare. So, say, only one war in a century instead of two or three. But then aggressive war will disappear. Ya, but if aggressive war disappears, will there then [be] any war¹¹⁴ left? Or how do we have to understand that?

Mr. Reinken: Subjectively aggressive war. It used to be considered the only manly thing to do, to knock over as many neighbors as you could.

^{xxix} In original: "*respublica phaenomenon*")

^{xxx} Ibid., 150.

^{xxxi} Ibid., 153.

LS: Ya, but what does Kant mean? That a war where both sides can act on the defensive, yet they have different view of their rights and they cannot settle it in any other way but by war.

Mr. Reinken: It could be Malthusean.^{xxxii}

LS: No, no, that would be an entirely different [thing]. We are concerned now [with] how do we have to understand infinite progress. Why should there be a need for infinite progress, one could rightly say? Ya?¹¹⁵ After all, [those]¹¹⁶ seem to be finite steps:¹¹⁷ considerable improvement of international law, and then finally something like United Nations but of course universal; and a guarantee that all conflicts between the members of such a United Nations will be settled by arbitration. That would be finite. Why should we need an infinite development?

Mr. Reinken: You might need the UN peacekeeping forces, and really to use them.

LS: Ya, but this would then be policing. That would not be different from what is done in a civil society by the policeman. That would not be war proper, although it [LS chuckles]—I mean, it would look like war [laughter]. Then there would be a strange change in the meaning of war. Well, we have observed some of the things. The Cold War, for example. The state never—¹¹⁸

Mr. Reinken: We had the police action in 1950.^{xxxiii}

LS: Ya, that's true. Good. Now I think we have to leave it at that. And is there any points any one of you would like to raise? Now is still the time. Mr. . . .

Student: I wonder whether you might say something about the Second Supplement of *Perpetual Peace*, which I believe is about philosophers becoming kings.¹¹⁹ That's on page 115 . . .

LS: Ya.¹²⁰ I mean, Kant does not suggest the rule of philosophers. On the contrary, the philosophers are subjects, it's made perfectly clear, ya?¹²¹ But these subjects could *conceivably* become the rulers¹²² by becoming the teachers of the governors. I mean, what is—

Same Student: Well, I was wondering,¹²³ I mean, your answer seemed to imply that Kant's answer is not so different from that of the ancients . . .

LS: In this respect, no. I mean only that Kant has a greater certainty that this publication of the philosophic teaching will be successful. Greater certainty than, say, Plato or Aristotle would have.

^{xxxii} Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), English economist who speculated about catastrophic conditions resulting from overpopulation.

^{xxxiii} The Korean War (1950-1953).

Same Student: But on the other hand, he¹²⁴ seems to believe that philosophers are more corruptible than Plato and Aristotle thought they might be.

LS: Well, they understand two different things. Kant means his colleagues, and Plato and Aristotle meant true philosophers. This is . . .

Same Student: So you seem to—

LS: Where does he¹²⁵ speak about the corruptibility of philosophers?

Mr. Reinken: The last thing he suggests, that¹²⁶ “the class of philosophers is by nature incapable of plotting and lobbying.”^{xxxiv}

LS: Yes.

Mr. Reinken:¹²⁷ In the last sentence, “the class of philosophers is by nature incapable of plotting and lobbying.” This is why the government can tolerate them . . .

LS: This was prior to the age of the *Foundations* [laughter].

Now let me conclude, then, since we have read Kant, with a joke partly based on Kant, which a very witty man I know (. . . he died young) made after he had been in this country for some years. And he raised this German question, which in this form of course doesn’t occur in Kant but is Kantian in the formulation: How is thinking at all possible? *Wie ist Denken überhaupt möglich?* And¹²⁸ now, given the fact that Kant in a way suggested that thinking is possible by laying foundations (laying foundations, *grundlagen dachte*, as some neo-Kantians call it), this late friend of mine gave an American answer to the German question: How is thinking altogether possible? Answer: through foundations. [Laughter] And here you see now, as long as I lay no foundation, where should they lobby?

Student: With administrations.

LS: Pardon? With administrations? Ya, but the administration was self-administration. The rector was always a professor elected for a year, therefore not much could be done.¹²⁹ But given human depravity, doubtless¹³⁰ all kinds of corruption were possible. [LS chuckles] Even in these wonderful times, there is no doubt about that.

¹ Deleted “As for...”

² Deleted “that.”

³ Deleted “And, so...”

⁴ Deleted “belongs to...”

⁵ Deleted “is not...in German...”

⁶ Deleted “that is...so that... *de jure*.”

⁷ Deleted “there...and also.”

^{xxxiv} Ibid., 116.

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- ⁸ Deleted “as he.”
- ⁹ Deleted “and....”
- ¹⁰ Deleted “Now, but let us....”
- ¹¹ Deleted “That....”
- ¹² Deleted “still...and the....”
- ¹³ Deleted “Now...but....”
- ¹⁴ Deleted “it would be in....”
- ¹⁵ Deleted “would be....”
- ¹⁶ Deleted “but the...why...yeah.”
- ¹⁷ Deleted “philosophy....”
- ¹⁸ Deleted “That’s...you must [inaudible words].”
- ¹⁹ Deleted “apparently....”
- ²⁰ Deleted “is that, people—”
- ²¹ Deleted “We are speaking now....”
- ²² Deleted “That....”
- ²³ Deleted “Now that....”
- ²⁴ Deleted “you...you...you.”
- ²⁵ Deleted “which is now...yeah, no....”
- ²⁶ Deleted “to our....”
- ²⁷ Deleted “page 111, paragraph 3, where Kant states this...yeah, no, in.”
- ²⁸ Deleted “in the doctrine.”
- ²⁹ Deleted “the....”
- ³⁰ Deleted “for example....”
- ³¹ Deleted “say....”
- ³² Deleted “is not....”
- ³³ Deleted “we have the...the....”
- ³⁴ Deleted “the same *Saturn*....”
- ³⁵ Text has: “*eo instante*.”
- ³⁶ Deleted “at his ancient....”
- ³⁷ Deleted “What does this....”
- ³⁸ Deleted “now...but in the....”
- ³⁹ Deleted “a very....”
- ⁴⁰ Deleted “detection....”
- ⁴¹ Deleted “You have...the story....”
- ⁴² Deleted “can....”
- ⁴³ Deleted “or so it is....”
- ⁴⁴ Deleted “is....”
- ⁴⁵ Deleted “have their...have their punishment by nature....”
- ⁴⁶ Deleted “with nature....”
- ⁴⁷ Deleted “has doctrine of....”
- ⁴⁸ Deleted “when we turn to this...in the same context. If you....”
- ⁴⁹ Deleted “Which is....”
- ⁵⁰ Deleted “Kant....”
- ⁵¹ Deleted “You mean...there was...I mean there was....”
- ⁵² Deleted “Could one....”
- ⁵³ Deleted “and.”
- ⁵⁴ Deleted “Hitler’s....”
- ⁵⁵ Deleted “that’s very....”
- ⁵⁶ Deleted “our....”
- ⁵⁷ Deleted “*Steady, Continuous Progress*....”
- ⁵⁸ Deleted “what he...that what he is going to do is a kind of...no I’m sorry that is a bit later. In the next paragraph.”
- ⁵⁹ Deleted “but then....”
- ⁶⁰ Deleted “predication.”
- ⁶¹ Deleted “Marx doesn’t say....”

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- 62 Deleted "They...."
63 Deleted "And now...."
64 Deleted "which...on."
65 Deleted "of which she."
66 Deleted "he makes a...."
67 Deleted "LS: Pardon? **Same Student:** [inaudible word]."
68 Deleted "to the...."
69 Deleted "reaches...."
70 Deleted "Does this."
71 Deleted "is."
72 Deleted "The progress from...there is...."
73 Deleted "Kant says...."
74 Text has "(*punctum flexus contrarii*)."
75 Deleted "there was...."
76 Deleted "look...you make some...."
77 Deleted "and up...."
78 Deleted "what...."
79 Deleted "Middle Ages."
80 Deleted "There is no...."
81 Deleted "in the question...in the...."
82 Deleted "had only...."
83 Deleted "Now...."
84 Deleted "**Reinken:** Of memorial— **LS:** Yeah."
85 Deleted "So and now, what...."
86 Deleted "It is not...."
87 Deleted "and...."
88 Deleted "the moral...which...."
89 Deleted "which...."
90 Deleted "we...they...."
91 Deleted "were...."
92 Deleted "it is...."
93 Deleted "is...is a very...."
94 Deleted "it is...the...."
95 Deleted "No, 17...it was come before [inaudible words, a student offers inaudible suggestion] come before.."
96 Deleted "although"
97 Deleted "feudal order...."
98 Deleted "I mean this...."
99 Deleted "is no longer...can ever...it would be...."
100 Deleted "forgets its...."
101 Deleted "are."
102 Deleted "arising...."
103 Deleted "but based on...."
104 Deleted "will therefore...."
105 Deleted "there is of course...."
106 Deleted "that is...."
107 Deleted "it...."
108 Deleted "there might be...."
109 Deleted "of here."
110 Deleted "as we are...."
111 Deleted "what will...."
112 Deleted "In the...."
113 Deleted "This I do not...."
114 Moved "be"
115 Deleted "Why should there...."

¹¹⁶ Changed from “that.”

¹¹⁷ Deleted “Improvement of international law....”

¹¹⁸ Deleted “**Reinken**: We had the police action in 50...1950. **LS**: Pardon?”

¹¹⁹ Deleted “**LS**: In...in—”

¹²⁰ Deleted “what is...what....”

¹²¹ Deleted “In the....”

¹²² Deleted “in the way that the....”

¹²³ Deleted “whether you thought that was a....”

¹²⁴ Deleted “believes that philosophers...or.”

¹²⁵ Deleted “say....”

¹²⁶ Deleted “this class....”

¹²⁷ Deleted “The....”

¹²⁸ Deleted “then....”

¹²⁹ Deleted “in....”

¹³⁰ Deleted “were....”

Session 17: June 1, 1967

Leo Strauss: This is meant to be a free discussion, but in order to limit that freedom reasonably, or another way to free and not a licentious discussion,¹ let me first state or in each case state the subject to be taken up.

Now the first point would be then something like [this]: the whole question of reading in general, and of reading Kant in particular. Is there anyone who wishes to speak on this subject? After all, we have some experience with that. Yes?

Student: I wonder² whether you thought more detail than we already have about the relations between the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*, might have to the readings that we were more or less primarily concerned.

LS: Ya, sure, there are such relations but let us first take the general question. I mean, you have read other books, and let us limit ourselves to the books we have read here in seminar. Kant's books are different from, say, this year we read Nietzsche, and we read the Platonic *Apology* and *Crito*. Now are these books of the same character, [the] same kind? And accordingly, is the reading of fundamentally the same or of a different character? Yes?

Mr. Bruell: Well, would you say something about why the knowledge of the kind of writing we that saw in the *Apology* and *Crito* should have simply, well, been lost or not be considered by a man like Kant? I don't mean it to be merely an historical question, but whether—

LS: Ya, I don't know of any consideration of this possibility by Kant. Well, we know some facts of the way in which Kant wrote. Between 1770 and 1781, the date in which the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared, he did not publish anything. And there was a great revolution in Kant's thought, and then³ that meant this great breakthrough⁴ toward his transcendental philosophy. And then he wrote down the *Critique of Pure Reason* in a very short time, I think about seven months. And while he wrote that,⁵ he wrote down also certain things regarding morality in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as we have seen. But this was provisional, without Kant's being fully aware of its provisional character. When he applied his mind to it in writing the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*, things looked rather different; and then a few years later when he wrote the *Critique of Practical Reason*, other changes took place. So in other words, Kant's position was developing in crucially important matters while he wrote these things, and this process hadn't stopped by the time he wrote his shorter essays, the later ones, which we have read in English translation.

So in other words, Kant does not stand above in the way in which Plato stands above, you know? But he is in the midst of it. This—well,⁶ better or worse, that is, it would be a very long question. At any rate, one cannot expect the same *akribeia*, the same neatness, as far as writing is concerned, as in the case of Plato of course, or for that matter of Aristotle—at least of those writings of Aristotle which were surely written by him.

But⁷ for example, to take a book closer to Kant, Leibniz's.⁸ In a way *the* book by Leibniz is the *Théodicée*. Now this is clearly well composed, although not comparable to some books written in antiquity or in the Middle Ages; but still it is something where Leibniz himself, his position, did not undergo a change while he wrote it. He only had to think of how to present it as clearly and suggestively and so on as possible.⁹ So in other words, from Kant's writings no one would get an inkling of a possibility of the writings of another type to which I have frequently referred. This much we can say. Mr. Reinken?

Mr. Reinken: Well, I wanted to offer one point that struck me at the time—and not in contradiction, but just to underline that it isn't black and white, the thoroughly composed and the thoroughly naïve. Kant is humorous, though . . .

LS: . . .

Mr. Reinken: And humor can lead up towards irony, and I think that that appeared in the very last thing we read, after he had had his troubles with the censor.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: And it was a small work, and he perhaps was paying a little more attention to presentation at this point. But when he brings up the business of the French Revolution and says that it's the enthusiasm with which it was greeted in Germany that gives us hope, his tongue may have been a little bit in his cheek, because¹⁰ as he goes on he says that simply the revolution won't be forgotten. The fact that the Germans greeted it with such cheers and hurrahs, which he named as the cause, is not in fact the cause that he continues to talk about: the revolution itself . . .

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: And it's a minor piece of irony for him to introduce¹¹ the French Revolution under the more polite term of German disinterested response.

LS: Yes, and then there are other things,¹² two theological writings as we can call them, which we have read about the presumptive origin of history, and the other was *The End of All Things*, one dealing with the beginning and the other with the end of the Bible, and where clearly Kant consciously and in a way explicitly plays. He tries to inject reason where¹³ I think one can say that [he] did not find too much reason. Surely these things are there, but they are rather obvious.

Now¹⁴ what I have in mind is not a matter of style. Kant was a very powerful writer.¹⁵ When this does not come through in the English—well, that is the difficulty with translations altogether, but his German is very powerful. And even the long sentences which are so hard to follow in English do not have the same character in German, because there the Germans never underwent this pruning tradition connected in England

with Addison,ⁱ you know, and the *Spectator*ⁱⁱ—the notion that a sentence¹⁶ prevalently not have any clauses. Back then, someone compared it to talking like a dog, you know? [Laughter] You know that? Which has great merits no doubt, but has also . . . by them. Ya?

Student: Was Kant the first serious writer who no longer used the older method of writing?

LS: Well that is very hard, ya. You see,¹⁷ there is a great difficulty in the older method of writing. How many men used it altogether? I mean, I couldn't answer this question because one would have to be infinitely more learned than I am, and perhaps than anybody can be, to give you an answer¹⁸ in terms of numbers. And you must not forget the many men¹⁹ who simply were in fundamental agreement with the accepted use of their times and could be very great men nevertheless. Let us not be, how should I say, snobbish nonconformists, ya? But I would say that among the greatest philosophers of modern times, Kant surely conceals much less than any of his predecessors. I mean, think only of Hume, who seems to be very direct and²⁰ quite straightforward in his *Treatise on Human Nature*. But once you look at the *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, which is an imitation of Cicero's *On The Nature of the Gods*, and where you don't know²¹ exactly where Hume stands²²—I mean, it is as difficult to say as in the case of Cicero himself. Yes?

Mr. Reinken: I wanted to add that I'm glad that you mentioned Hume, because it seemed to show an awareness on his part of this whole problem that he used as a motto to one of the treatises, I think it's the enquiry into morals,ⁱⁱⁱ where he quotes Tacitus, he says: "Oh happy the times when you can say what you think."

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken:²³ And to take another person of direct influence on Kant, Rousseau. You have called our attention to the *Reveries of the Solitary Wanderer*, where he has this long discussion of lying and the—

LS: Ya.

Mr. Reinken: One of the mistakes of his life at the . . .

LS: Ya.²⁴ Rousseau²⁵ surely has much more in common with the earlier way of writing than Kant does.²⁶ You must also not forget this. The other men of the first rank of whom we think in modern times, none of them was a university professor. Kant was the first, I mean, and his famous German successors also were university professors.²⁷ From Kant, Mr. Schelling, and Hegel; and whereas Descartes is not thinkable as a professor, nor was [he]. Locke almost became one, but then he ran away before it was too late. And Hume of

ⁱ Joseph Addison (1672-1719), English author and co-founder of *The Spectator* magazine.

ⁱⁱ A daily magazine appearing from 1711-1712.

ⁱⁱⁱ *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751).

course was another one.²⁸ And so Kant grew out of the German academic life. There was, for a poor man like Kant—I mean, there was no alternative. What else could he [do], except he could become a *littérateur*, and that was not somehow not the right thing . . . ²⁹Coming also from a rather provincial part of Germany, that was out of the question. Yes. Now this, at any rate³⁰—that is clear, that³¹ it wouldn't make any sense to read Kant in the way in which the other great writers of the past have to be read.

In Germany, one must also not forget one of the greatest masters of German literature: Lessing. He knew very well of this other kind of writing, and he is perhaps the latest witness we have to that. And Kant knew these³² writings of Lessing but this did not affect him particularly. I'm not aware it affected him in any way. I mean,³³ that has very much also to do with Kant's moralism. You see one could take this view,³⁴ which you meet also today, that one should say what one thinks; and if one cannot say it because one is afraid of consequences either for oneself or for other human beings, then one should keep his own mouth shut. What is called writing means writing sincerely and without any ruses of any kind. Now this strict moral view is, we can say, implied in Kant's teaching. So apart from everything else, Kant would have had a moral incentive never to say what he does not think.³⁵ He himself made this distinction. It is not immoral not to say what one thinks, but it is immoral to say what one does not think. And this of course³⁶ has been victorious after Kant, and especially since the modern liberal and democratic development has made it practically harmless for anybody to say anything, as you doubtless know. I mean, some people still find there is too much censorship still, like this young man in Berkeley^{iv} of whom I have read, but³⁷ I mean they acted in the spirit of their protest and nothing happened to them. But let us not devote too much time to this question. Yes?

Student: I was just wondering if you could you tell us where Lessing discusses these styles of writing?

LS: Yes. Well,³⁸ I don't know whether these things are translated into English. One is called *Leibniz on Eternal Punishments*, and the other is called *Bisabachias*, *Bisabachias*, that was a Polish writer, *on Trinity*. And then *Ernst und Falk - Dialogues on Freemasons*. These are probably the three most important. But there are also other discussions of these matters,³⁹ in his *Laokoon*, where there are some discussions of how to read Homer, very tentatively stated but very interesting. And I think these are the most important.

And Ernst and Falk, these are two men, names of two men.⁴⁰ But in German "*Ernst*" means also seriousness. And now a man who is not serious but jokes is also called in German *Schalk*. So "*Ernst*" and "*Falk*" stands for "*Ernst*" and "*Schalk*," so to speak. And⁴¹ what Lessing says there about Freemasonry has very little to do with empirical Freemasonry but with Freemasonry *noumenon*, as Kant would call it; and that means men dedicated to the primacy of speculation, who for this reason⁴² are secretive.⁴³ Only not the somewhat absurd rites of the empirical Freemasons, but some more worthy and more interesting thing. I don't know whether these things are translated into English . . .

^{iv} Strauss might be referring to Jack Weinberg, an alumnus of the University of California at Berkeley, whose arrest in September 1964 for promoting and seeking support for off-campus political activity led to the formation of the Free Speech Movement.

Mr. Reinken: They are . . .

LS: They are?

Mr. Reinken: The *Laokoon*, of course.

LS: Ya, sure. Now there is another writing of Lessing which has only indirectly to do with this question but in an indirect way very much, and that is *The Education of the Human Race*.⁴⁴ Some enemies of Lessing have asserted that this⁴⁵ was not written by Lessing but by somebody else, because they wish to deprive Lessing of the great honor. I think they were right in this case. And Lessing's remarks say this was a piece given to him, and only to be edited by him with some minor changes. I think that corresponds very well to the truth.⁴⁶ He was willing to play with such a possibility of a philosophy of history in plain language, and⁴⁷ the history of mankind as the divine education of the human race. But that was not, I think, his serious view.

Now let then us come a bit closer to what the subject of the seminar was, philosophy of history in Kant. In order to pose the question properly, one must start from the fact that philosophy of history is a recent thing.⁴⁸ The term seems to have been coined by Voltaire around the middle of the eighteenth century, in the first version or the first section of his *Essai sur les Moeurs*.^v But one can say with some justice that prior to Voltaire, Vico started that in his *New Science*.^{vi} One cannot trace it beyond.⁴⁹

But we cannot but consider what happened to philosophy of history afterwards, after Kant: Hegel, and beyond Hegel up to the present day. And to date of course one can say [that] it is the fundamental question of philosophy, because as now asserted, the historical character of human thought means that it is impossible for man, and even for the greatest man, to transcend his time. All thought belongs to time. The individual is the son of his time, as Hegel put it. Or to use Nietzsche's very reasonable little change: in the best case he is the stepson of his time. But⁵⁰ human thought is necessarily belonging to a time, necessarily *dated* by this very fact. And that is of course⁵¹ diametrically opposed to the premodern view, the view still held by Kant the modern: that human thought in its highest aims at what is transhistorical, beyond change, and therefore also human thought itself must be in the decisive respect beyond change.

Now in Kant this [fundamental] question comes up⁵² only in a very unworthy manner in the last four pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. We have seen there is the section, "The History of Pure Reason," which might seem to intimate that pure reason itself⁵³ undergoes a history. But that is surely more than Kant means, although the fact that he could write these four pages with this title is a straw in the wind.

In Kant we are concerned with a much more limited question, namely, whether a philosophy of history is possible . . . A philosophy of history, meaning an attempt to

^v First published in 1756.

^{vi} First published in 1725.

show reason, meaning in history as opposed to what Kant called the abderitic view, according to which there is no meaning in history but ups and downs without any meaning. There is not a single process directed toward an end and achieving this end, either in finite time or in infinite time.

Now the question in Kant becomes then more precise on the following consideration: that in Kant's great systematic works, there is hardly anything said about this philosophy of history, except the one paragraph in the *Critique of Judgment*. But on the other hand, Kant wrote quite a few pieces, as we have seen, essays pertaining to the question of the philosophy of history. And therefore, the question is: How does it come that Kant is concerned with the philosophy of history yet keeps it somehow outside of the sanctuary of his system? And this was the question with which we were chiefly concerned in this course. Now I will stop again and hear your suggestions.

Student: Well, when you said before that pure reason doesn't have a history, that means in a sense that it doesn't really have a development. That is,⁵⁴ it does have an abrupt enlightening, and in that sense, even for pure reason, Kant is interested [in] how, as pure reason can progress, be enlightened and what are its conditions, how it can in the future, can be enlightened? . . . principles he's talking about can be really grasped. And he's interested in our race being enlightened, and to that degree there is a history which he had in front of him, and—

LS: Ya, that makes sense, but in other words is somewhat too vague. I mean, in what—first of all, in what sense does pure reason not have a history?

Same Student: Well—

LS: For example, could the principle of causality as Kant defines it ever have been unknown?

Same Student: Well, it is kind of an interesting thing because, for instance, in the preface to the *Foundations of Natural Science* he deduces the laws of nature, almost as Newton deduced them, and says⁵⁵ that these are *a priori* truths of reason which are necessary. And yet the obvious question is: Why weren't these laws of nature known before Newton? And—

LS: Ya. Well,⁵⁶ that doesn't to give rise to a very profound question. For example,⁵⁷ man needed quite a preparation before this could be seen in its purity. But once it is seen,⁵⁸ there is no change.

But, for example, look at it⁵⁹ this way. Men appeared on earth. No one knows when, under what conditions. But surely this is clear, that man in his primary state was wholly unable to be a scientist or philosopher. The⁶⁰ urgent needs of the body and his passions, what Hobbes calls state of nature, that was nasty, brutish, and short. Then men began to build cities (according again to Hobbes) and then it was possible that philosophy or science would arise, but slowly, hesitatingly, and trial and error, some say more error

than trial. And it took a long time until reason discovered the right way. Apart from one relatively uninteresting problem, formal logic, which according to Kant was completed by Aristotle.

So the real change, a clear grasp of the right method, had come with Copernicus as Kant presents it, and Botticelli, Galileo—you know the names he mentions there. And⁶¹ so the development culminated in Newton. But still, why this was the most perfect exercise of reason, theoretical reason? It did not mean that the reasoning man understood reason itself. They tried to do that, men like Descartes and Locke, Hume. But this whole development, this greatest development of theoretical reason in modern science, pointed . . . to a clarification of reason itself. And this according to Kant was in principle achieved by him and not before, although Hume⁶² was of some help, and in another way Leibniz. But the decisive insight that sense—intuition, as Kant calls it, *Anschauung*—and thinking (one the principle of the British, and the other the principle of the continental rationalists) have to be properly seen in their radical difference and their necessary cooperation. And that was done according to Kant by Kant himself. Kant did not claim that he had completed the work, but he had the notion that it would be a matter of about twenty years from the time he wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* that it will have been completed. And then, well, what would have to be done would be simply to spread the knowledge of it, especially influence governments that they act on the principles of reason: the just or rational state, in other words, leading to the just and rational league of states.⁶³ However, the practical realization, the practical amount of reason—that is an infinite process, as Kant says. But the decisive changes could very well be made in the foreseeable future.

No, Kant is not concerned with the possibility that this might collapse again. But even if it would, if there would be another retrogression into barbarism, this would be rather sad for the contemporaries of that event. But if the human race⁶⁴ doesn't become extinct and they start again, we know quite well that what they will be led to eventually in that new eon will be again the *Critique of Pure Reason*—unless they remain a bit below that level, that could be. But⁶⁵ in that sense, that is the end of history.

Same Student: But assuming the development,⁶⁶ that kind of development⁶⁷ came to completion in him, in that in him, as far as he considers it, a kind of transition, arriving to moral . . . because he also believes that he also grasps the true principle⁶⁸ of morality. And morality is not enough; he is going to have other people understand it, because morality is not something⁶⁹ which has to be understood, it is something which has to be acted upon.

LS: Ya, it has also to be understood, as—

Same Student: Or acted upon . . .

LS: Yes, but on the other hand, if you act without⁷⁰ understanding properly⁷¹—you know, in the first part of the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* toward the end, where he

makes clear⁷² why philosophy must come in, because to be innocent⁷³ is a very nice thing.

Same Student: But it is hard to maintain.

LS: Ya, exactly, and therefore you need full theoretical clarity about the principle.

Student: I wondering if I might read a passage from an article written by Professor Fackenheim^{vii} on Kant—

LS: Ya. I think in *Kant-Studien*?⁷⁴ I know that, ya.

Same Student: I wondered if you would comment on it. It struck me as pointing in a slightly different direction from⁷⁵ your treatment in this course. He says: “In the *Critique of Judgment*⁷⁶ Kant sets himself the task to ‘seek out what nature can supply for the purpose of preparing (man) for what he himself must do in order to be an end in himself.’ This . . . is necessary if nature is to be shown to have value; to show that it has is the sole task of Kant’s construction of history.”^{viii}

LS: That is not quite true. I mean, that one could say that is the meaning of paragraph 83, but⁷⁷ Kant singled out three questions as parts of the question, “What is man?” [These are]: “What can I know?” “What must I do?” and “What can I hope?” The philosophy of history has very much to do with the question: What can I hope? What can I reasonably hope, or what am I morally obliged to hope?

Now this. I think I remember that article sufficiently to say this:⁷⁸ this article, which contain some very good observations, its greatest weakness is that he does not see the competition, if I may say so, in Kant’s thought between the immortality of the soul, life after death, and the philosophy of history, so that the immortality of the soul becomes a postulate of practical reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. And whereas⁷⁹—I mean, the meaningfulness of history does not become such a postulate. And⁸⁰ I think that we can understand it very well.

If the human problem is solved and can only be solved after death, then any earthly solutions of any other human problems are less important. If the human problem is⁸¹ not to bring about because man cannot bring about, but to have brought about a reconciliation, a harmony between worthiness⁸² of happiness and happiness (and worthiness of happiness means to be good), and this can only be brought about after death—then the other questions are of secondary importance. They are morally relevant, but in a secondary way. They are important because⁸³ it is our duty to act well in this life, in this world [LS taps on the table]. And therefore we must have, we cannot help having, an interest in the outcome of what we are doing.

^{vii} E. L. Fackenheim, “Kant’s Concept of History,” *Kant-Studien* 48 (1956/1957).

^{viii} *Ibid.*, 396.

In his discussion with Moses Mendelssohn in *Theory and Practice* (section 2, I think it is)⁸⁴ he makes this point. Mendelssohn was very much concerned with the improvement of the lot of the Jews. And Kant says,⁸⁵ “Hence Mendelssohn must have been concerned with the outcome of his efforts, and with the fate of the following generations,” although Mendelssohn⁸⁶ took the older view, the abderitic view [that] there will ups and downs and which Kant rejects. So⁸⁷ I regard this as a most important point. And⁸⁸ let me put it this way. Both doctrines, the immortality of the soul and the philosophy of history, are not theoretical doctrines according to Kant. That’s clear. They are all, say, projections of practical reason, but with different weight. The greatest weight is attached to the immortality of the soul rather than to the future on earth.

In the Jewish traditional language, the other world is called “the coming world,” the world to come. Now this has a double meaning, of course: coming after oneself in the other life; or it can mean the future, what in Judaism would be the messianic. And in Kant the emphasis is still stronger on the other life in the ordinary sense, whereas what happened in the nineteenth century, especially with Hegel of course, is that the concern is with the satisfaction and completion in this life.⁸⁹ I mean, this is what counts for Hegel, not a life⁹⁰ after death. For⁹¹ Kant is in this respect old fashioned.

Same Student: But as I understood⁹² the point [I] thought you were trying to make, that⁹³ the function of nature⁹⁴ which Kant is trying to restore both through the *Critique of Judgment* and through his essays on history is not so much to provide⁹⁵ a reward for morality or that happiness which would then conflict with the immortality of the soul, but rather to set the stage for morality. In other words,⁹⁶ nature shows that it is concerned with the moral law,⁹⁷ but while the moral law does not derive from [a] natural standard or the standard of nature, nature is in harmony with that standard not so much because it rewards morality but because⁹⁸ it forces man to be moral.

LS: No, that is not so. I mean, we have seen that.⁹⁹ The full moral duty of man, going much beyond what any individual can fulfill and even what absolute monarchs can do, would be the establishment of a just society, a universal society. And that means a league of republics governing the earth, ya, republics being by nature peaceful. You remember that. Now this goal¹⁰⁰ can be said to be the end that nature pursues. That’s what Kant says. And Kant gives a kind of proof of that.¹⁰¹ International trade increasing, positive religions losing their old powers, leading to religious wars—above all, wars which become ever more unbearable and leading, compelling, men in the direction of universal peace and republicanism.¹⁰² Kant is reasonably sure of that, but this cannot satisfy him, because this does not guarantee morality as he sees it but only legality. You remember that strong statement about the nation of devils.¹⁰³ Nature would force devils, Machiavellian politicians, unscrupulous businessmen, and what other kind of vicious and wicked people you might think of: nature forces such people into the just order evermore. But they remain the same SOB’s that they were. And¹⁰⁴ to transform oneself from such a Machiavellian into a good human being, that cannot be done by nature, nor by God, because otherwise that would mean interference with freedom. Only man, the individual, can make the change. Therefore, the philosophy of history cannot be as important as morality itself.

Now there are certain complications. We have seen that in reading these essays. That the progress towards the just society is not necessarily a moral progress, this is clear. But it is morally relevant. As moral beings, we must be concerned with it. You can take another example from that. No moral man can wish to live in a state of society in which moral action is *forbidden* by the government, ya? Is this not so? After all, it would be thinkable, would it not? In a way, the Nazis had such existence; in a way, the communists. So that doesn't mean that morality demands that the world¹⁰⁵ be safe for morality.¹⁰⁶ That would be too simple, you know? The question of sacrifice—somehow sacrifice belongs to morality; it cannot be so simple. But on the other hand, there could be a state of affairs where no moral sense could even develop because of government and other pressures. So there is a moral interest in that, in this improvement, in this political, legal improvement. But this political, legal improvement is in the decisive respect meaningless, namely, a nation of devils. That remains.

And one can see what Hegel did, and therefore what is underlying Marx *a fortiori* is a complete disregard of life after death; and the assumption that the strict dividing line between legality and morality,¹⁰⁷ that's not practical reason. That is to say, men who habitually act well, if only from low motives, ya, are not so terribly different from men who habitually act well from noble motives. Something of this kind is implied in what Hegel and Marx say.

Kant is here, of course, a sterner moralist. And by the way,¹⁰⁸ Kant's vengeance came with . . . The German . . . The individual verses were . . . Mr. . . . ?

Student: In the Preface to the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant seems to qualify that statement about a nation of devils. He's saying that no practical rule could ever maintain a long-term conformity without a sense of justice to back it up. So, what I want to say is¹⁰⁹ that about a nation of devils: of course men aren't devils; they might be—

LS: No, no, that is—

Same Student: They would be better behaved if they were.

LS: Kant does not say that men are devils. He says "some men." And even if all men were devils, they would nevertheless be driven to that. But I wish you could read to me the passage in—

Same Student: I would if I had it with me but I don't have a copy with me, but it's right at the end—

Mr. Reinken: Of which?

Same Student: Of the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Right at the end of the Preface.

LS: Well, Mr. Reinken will try to find it, and then we will discuss it.

Mr. Reinken: Now, what do you want?¹¹⁰

Same Student: He says that the historical evolution is in the decisive respect meaningless. But isn't it true that at certain epochs, I mean, particularly the modern epoch, it is more possible for men to be moral than in, say, the Roman Empire or some time much earlier? So, I mean, isn't it in a way,¹¹¹ very meaningful that history—

LS: Ya, sure. That was a deliberate overstatement of mine . . . I spoke first, more considerably, of the moral relevance of the history, but it is morally relevant without being intrinsically moral. That is the point. And therefore it doesn't have the status of morality proper.

Now if one looks and if one takes a somewhat broader view of the situation and tries to see Kant¹¹² within the context of what modern political philosophy was about, one would have to say the following things, I believe. What happened from Machiavelli on was a deliberate lowering of the standards, both of the biblical and of the classical traditions. And in the formula of Machiavelli himself: no imaginary kingdoms, no utopias, no kingdoms of God, but human commonwealths or kingdoms, taking men absolutely as they are, i.e., not expecting virtue from them but rather expecting them to be guided by tough motivations like desire for security, for property, for fame, for power, what have you. And¹¹³ if you start from below, as it were, if you build on low but solid ground, as Churchill once called it,¹¹⁴ then you can succeed. You have a chance, at least, to succeed.¹¹⁵ Good.¹¹⁶ This program was then elaborated and made more concrete by such men as Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith, and the others, and where this Machiavellian ingredient becomes always visible. I referred more than once to private vice, public benefit, which is preserved in Kant in the "nation of devils" remark.

Now¹¹⁷ the first thing which Kant does, we can say,¹¹⁸ in firmly accepting the modern tradition—especially in natural science, but not only there—is to restore the original dignity of morality and moral standards¹¹⁹ in brackets, in parentheses, in a way that had been tried before Kant by Shaftesbury. But Shaftesbury consciously belonged to the ancients rather than to the moderns; therefore, that's a different story. Kant, in no way wishing to reverse the decision in favor of the moderns which had been made in the seventeenth century, nevertheless¹²⁰ wishes to make for the first time morality, properly understood, the basis of politics. So¹²¹ his criticism of, say, Machiavelli and Locke-Hobbes is at the same time a criticism of Aristotle and Plato. The whole principle of *eudemonia*, understood in whichever way . . . means this. So¹²² Kant's work is then at first glance the highest point of moral thought in politics which ever was.

And yet when we look more closely, we see that this other sinister ingredient, if I may call it¹²³ that way from the old-fashioned point of view, lives on in Kant. Or to use crude words for a crude thought: Kant's idealism has important connections with this kind of

typically modern political realism. And that¹²⁴ becomes so clear in his philosophy of history, and that is why it is so very interesting.

It is of course also within his moral philosophy proper, insofar as the¹²⁵ fundamental part of Kant's moral philosophy as developed in his *Metaphysics of Morals* is the doctrine of right, the second part being the doctrine of virtue. Now the doctrine of right asserts [that] there is only one innate or inborn right: the right to freedom. That¹²⁶ takes the place of self-preservation in pre-Kantian thought. Freedom, yes; but what does this freedom mean?¹²⁷ I think I read to you this passage, that this right, inborn right which man has includes the right to lie, i.e., includes the right to something which is morally bad. Now it is clear we could not have a reasonable measure of freedom, politically speaking, from censorship and nosy magistrates if we did not have the right to lie. And yet there is something remarkable that that philosopher who has condemned lying in any form as much as Kant has done should grant man a right to lie which is to be respected by every other man. That is also quite realistic.

And in the same context, Kant raises the question: How come¹²⁸ [what] men call ethics [is] the theory of duties and not the theory of rights? Now I do not wish to go into the question of what these terms "right" and "duties" meant in premodern times, but that Kant can raise this question¹²⁹ I think shows what a tremendous change has taken place. No one¹³⁰ had ever doubted that, say, duties, whether these are *debitum* in Latin or *officia* (probably *officia*, a Stoic term, a take on Cicero's *Offices*)—but of course morality is the doctrine of duties. But for Kant, the heir of people like Hobbes and Locke, it could become a question: Why not with equal right the doctrine of rights? Surely no one can speak of duties without bringing in, by implication, rights. If you have the duty to live for your country, you have the right to live, ya, because you cannot do your duty to your country. So duties imply rights, but whether that is spelled out and emphasized makes a great difference. The other way around, too: you cannot speak of rights without¹³¹ admitting implicit duties. But the question is also: To what extent¹³² are the duties emphasized? Therefore, we must watch very carefully in reading books in political philosophy, earlier books. To what extent is there any awareness of this distinction between duties and rights and, if there is,¹³³ what is the emphasis on it?

A simple example. When Socrates says in the *Apology* "*dikaios eimi apologêsasthai*,"^{ix} "I am just"—literally translated, "in making a¹³⁴ speech of defense"—does he mean: I am obliged to do this? It is my duty to do it? Or: It is my right to do it? That cannot be settled on the basis of the Greek word *dikaios*, "just," which he uses. But I would say, taking everything into consideration, I would say it means: I am obliged, have the duty, to do it.

Aristotle says in the *Ethics*:¹³⁵ What the law does not command it forbids. That creates some difficulty for modern interpreters, as I saw, because is this not terribly tyrannical? "What the law does not command, it does *not* forbid"—that is what we would all say, and what Hobbes certainly said. But Aristotle's view is the older view, the view belonging to ancient law.¹³⁶ We are in every respect subject to law, and when the law does not command it forbids. And therefore,¹³⁷ as one modern commentator raised the question in

^{ix} 18a.

this connection: The law never commands to live or to breathe, and therefore, are we forbidden to breathe? Well, the answer is that the law commands that we, at least if we are of age, are ready to defend the country. And by this very fact it commands us to breathe, because if you would stop breathing, you would no longer be able to fight and so on.

This question has, I believe, never been ever studied properly. It is a manageable question because it would be a question to be addressed to the great authors writing on the law, on apologies. But it has never been properly done.¹³⁸ One would have to have access to a first-rate library because you have to go through all kinds of out-of-the-way things.¹³⁹ So I can speak now only from memory; we wouldn't have these books here. But in Thomas Aquinas's discussion of natural law, for example, there is no discussion of rights properly. But when you read later commentators, say, in the seventeenth century, there they are mentioned. They are not yet mentioned in Thomas Aquinas. Now, how come? Is this the influence of Roman law (or of positive law, at any rate) on philosophy, or is this not a whole change in the atmosphere which leads to this greater concern with rights? That is the question that one would have to . . . Yes.

By the way, a former student of mine, now chairman of the department at Cornell, Walter Berns, wrote his doctoral thesis on freedom and virtue, and I think that is a proper formulation of what the issue was. The moral principle was virtue or something like virtue, say, righteousness in the biblical sense. And then from a certain moment on, freedom, in contradistinction to virtue or righteousness, becomes the guiding theme. This change surely has taken place, and there is quite a bit of evidence for that in¹⁴⁰ Hobbes, and Locke, and Rousseau, and Kant, and Descartes.

Now did you find the passage?

Student: Yeah, first . . . literally . . . in a moment: "the unmoral ground of action may indeed now and then produce lawful actions, more often it brings forth unlawful ones."^{x141}

LS: Here on page 6. "Philosophy which mixes pure principles with empirical ones does not deserve the name." Is that the context? "Much less does it deserve the name of moral philosophy." Ya, that is a good idea;¹⁴² "it is not sufficient to that which should be morally good that it conform to the law; it must be done for the sake of the law." In other words, that is the distinction between morality and mere legality. "Otherwise the conformity is merely contingent and spurious, because, though the unmoral ground may indeed now and then produce lawful actions, more often it brings forth unlawful ones."^{xi}

Yes. And this, you say,¹⁴³ contradicts¹⁴⁴ the passage about the nation of devils. Ya, but Kant speaks here in universal terms. That is so. But could it not be that there is a state of society in which vice does not pay, so that the unmoral motive could not find its unmoral outlet but only a moral outlet? Well,¹⁴⁵ to take the extreme discussion in Plato's *Republic*,

^x Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 6.

^{xi} Ibid.

book 2, Glaucon. If every man has to live the whole day in public, ya, and even those who spent the night, so to say, in public because everyone can enter his bedroom at any time, where could he do something forbidden? He would be in a glass house all day, he couldn't do anything.

¹⁴⁶But could there not be a situation in society in which it simply doesn't pay to do something? Take an example: tax evasion. It is an immoral act. But is it not possible that there would be such an excellent system of supervision of taxpayers that¹⁴⁷ everyone would pay his taxes, because the chances to go to jail would be, say, 95 percent,¹⁴⁸ and so on?

So that remains, what he says here—that is, the general statement concerning the fundamental situation between morality and legality. But there may be situations, and then that is exactly the meaning of social progress, that immoral actions do not pay anymore. Whether it is a sound assertion, a realistic assertion,¹⁴⁹ I'm not now concerned with that. But this would be the reconciliation of the two statements.

Student: I can only explain, myself,¹⁵⁰ his placing of so much importance upon his own explication of principles for a philosophy of history. He says that history will take its course further than the philosopher of history can project, or show how this course of history is going to come about, mainly because¹⁵¹ he is one of the generators of that course . . .

LS: Well, I will try to restate my objection to your objection, or my solution of your objection. The difference between morality and legality stands for Kant. But while legality is a very poor thing compared with morality, nevertheless, the increase in legality is morally relevant.

In a way, this is something very commonsensical. For example, does not every sensible man wish that the number of murders committed in the city of Chicago should decrease, even if this decrease were due only to the . . . procedures or . . . Is this not so? So in other words, these men who today murder would then stop murdering merely because they can't get away with murder. So they do not become good men, but still is it not of some importance? To that extent, what Kant says seems to make sense.

Same Student: Is it possible that he contradicts the philosophy of history or his moral philosophy as necessary to the future course of history? Because what's necessary for some motives¹⁵² of some . . . not the least of the morals of the feeling of duty, of sense of duty to be behind those historical changes to some extent? In other words, wasn't it possible, that . . . that . . . that course wouldn't go along uninterrupted if there wasn't¹⁵³ a recognition of the philosophy of morals which he wrote about?

LS: Well, I do not quite understand you. Do you mean that Kant's moral philosophy as such is an ingredient in the historical process? Ya, that is quite possible.¹⁵⁴ No, I think that Kant has, of course, in mind the Enlightenment, ya? The Enlightenment as a force on

the whole conducive toward political progress, which political progress is morally relevant.

Same Student: The moral citizens, wouldn't you say—

LS: Pardon?

Same Student:¹⁵⁵ I mean, to some extent,¹⁵⁶ amongst people, or classes, or the higher classes, or just the educated,¹⁵⁷ the best way I understand it is—

LS: Yes—

Same Student: those people have to be moralized or have to be given a sense of duty on rational grounds.

LS: Yes, and therefore there are passages (we have seen that) in which Kant seems to¹⁵⁸ suggest that there is this progress—this political, social, progress is also moral progress.¹⁵⁹ But there is no necessity for that, and I believe it is clearer if one leaves it at saying¹⁶⁰ that what nature brings about, or what is brought about by these amoral forces is only legality and not morality. This is morally relevant.¹⁶¹

Kant did not unequivocally¹⁶² (a man very cautious) say that this progress in legality¹⁶³ leads sooner or later to progress in morality, although¹⁶⁴ we read one or two remarks in which he suggests that. And then of course¹⁶⁵ the philosophy of history would¹⁶⁶ have a much higher status if the progress in legality is a progress in morality, and yet there would still remain the fact that the harmony between worthiness of happiness and happiness is not achieved in this life, ya? And for this reason one would still have to hope for immortality of the soul. This would still remain. Yes?

Student: May I ask¹⁶⁷ what Kant's reply to Hegel might have been,¹⁶⁸ if he were confronted directly?

LS: It's hard to say.¹⁶⁹ I mean, he rejected him implicitly and therefore—as is shown by Hegel's polemics against Kant. But I think we can say perhaps this much, and that I referred to before: that Kierkegaard's rebellion against Hegel (I mean Hegel's system, his formulae) was a reassertion of Kant's point that¹⁷⁰ the thing which ultimately counts is the morality of the individual as distinguished from political or social progress. This one can say. Yes?

Student: Yeah, I was going to . . . is it fair to say, in a way, that Hegel was the Copernican revolution?

LS: Well, Hegel accepted that.¹⁷¹ You generalize the point. What is the relation of Hegel to Kant? That's what you mean? Well, the simplest form in which one could state this question is this: Kant's theoretical philosophy is an attempt to explain how experience and the world of experience is possible. Good. That is to say, Newton's world as well as

the so-called commonsense world. And now, in trying to understand that, Kant discovers and lays bare pure reason, pure intuition, space, and time. And also, of course,¹⁷² pure practical reason. Good. Now these things are all not matters of experience, but of *a priori* knowledge. But¹⁷³ are they not real? Is reason not real? Pure reason. That is Hegel's point.

One can say Kant¹⁷⁴ sees that the objects of experience are not the thing in itself, and he says the thing in itself is unknowable. But Hegel then raises first the question: But how can you say that it is unknowable? If it is absolutely unknowable, then you cannot even say that there is a thing in itself, and so on. But of course then that is only the first step: But naturally, you have shown very well, Kant, that the things of experience and the world of experience *cannot* be the whole. But what is lacking, and what one may call, if you wish, "the thing in itself" is the reason. So¹⁷⁵ one can say that Hegel's criticism of Kant is this: Kant has seen that the thing in itself cannot be sought in the earlier manner, in God and immortality of the soul, ya? And postulates of pure practical reason, that he¹⁷⁶ dismisses. But the thing in itself—the Absolute, as Hegel would call it—is that pure reason which Kant has laid bare and¹⁷⁷ whose metaphysical or ontological status Kant has simply disregarded.¹⁷⁸ Does this make sense? So Kant, in other words,¹⁷⁹ began to discover the true theme and subject of metaphysics without drawing the consequences. Hegel draws the consequences. And in connection with that, that would take now too long to explain, in connection with that, Hegel can now have a theoretical philosophy of history, namely, this reason, this pure reason discovered by Kant as effective in all experience, this necessarily undergoes a history. And this is in a way the theme of Hegel's philosophy of thought. Mr. Bruell?

Mr. Bruell: You said once earlier in the course that¹⁸⁰ you might tell us something about the ancient counterpart to this. What is the relation of what you just spoke about to the ancient understanding of reason?

LS:¹⁸¹ In this respect, of course, Hegel has more to do with the ancients than Kant has. And it is no accident that Hegel, at the end of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences*, quotes Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, book lambda, on reason—or rather, on *nous*, you know? I mean,¹⁸² to that extent Hegel restores the Aristotelian view, but of course with enormous differences. This *nous*, this intellect which intellects itself: *noeisis noeiseos*,¹⁸³ what is in Aristotle only reduced to this very sentence, so to speak.¹⁸⁴ The theme, the whole of philosophy for Hegel is proof that¹⁸⁵ being in the highest sense, or¹⁸⁶ as Hegel says, the truth of all being is intellect which intellects itself. Even nature, nonhuman nature, is *intellect*—intellect which is indeed alienated, as Hegel calls it. But being alienated, of course, it points back¹⁸⁷ to that from which it is alienated.¹⁸⁸

Hegel accepts the whole modern development and tries to integrate it¹⁸⁹ into a kind of Aristotelian teleology. But that is very inexact, of course, and the reason why it is so—and in fact the chief reason is this: the key word of Hegel is "dialectics," as you surely were aware. Now the meaning of dialectics¹⁹⁰ as I see it is this: it is a teleological movement,¹⁹¹ but which is not consciously a movement toward the end. In a given stage, you are confronted with a contradiction. This contradiction points beyond itself toward

the next stage and so on until the end is reached. But there is no conscious *aiming* at the end, guiding the process. So this dialectics is and is not teleological. That is the great difference. For Aristotle the teleology would require that,¹⁹² surely in the case of reason itself, that the end is known and guides the process. Yes?

Student: Except insofar as the plan for the tree is already concentrated in the acorn.

LS: Yes. That is Aristotle; and Hegel uses that to some extent.

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: But still, then, the end precedes, doesn't it? The acorn is preceded by the oak.

Same Student: Yeah, well, that's if—in other words, if you say it's not consciously moving towards an end if you consider the acorn oak only to be from stage to stage and not also applicable—

LS: Ya, that is true.

Same Student: to the whole historical movement.

LS: Ya. No, that is true.¹⁹³ I'm sorry, but I cannot be more precise now.¹⁹⁴ It is clearest in the case of the development of reason, you see? The end becomes visible at the end of the process,¹⁹⁵ whereas in the Platonic dialectics that would not be so. The end would be imperfectly seen in all stages, but it would be seen nevertheless. I am sorry, I cannot be more precise.¹⁹⁶

Now Mr. . . . wrote a master's thesis on T. H. Green.^{xii197} This will be of some help to you.¹⁹⁸ You know, a British philosopher around 1870, 1880. He tried to establish a compromise between Kant and Hegel, and¹⁹⁹ it would be of some help to have a look at it, at Green. Yes?

Student:²⁰⁰ Mr. Schaeffer . . . is there any precise way of establishing²⁰¹ what kind of knowledge is constituted by morality? Because he clearly wants to differentiate it from the kind that he's established in the speculative realm.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: But²⁰² at least it's always kind of escaped me as how precisely you would say, because of the problem of morality somehow also establishing these postulates, which are a matter of faith—

LS: No. It is not based on these postulates. I mean, the postulates follow from it. Well, theoretical reason, speculative reason, is essentially in need of sense experience, and

^{xii} Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882), British political philosopher and leader of the British Idealist movement.

without it, it is empty. Practical reason is not in such a . . . Practical reason dictates to us the moral law. We know, and that is all we know. We can bring it somewhat closer to our understanding by symbolizing it in various ways, what Kant calls the typic of practical reason, but that²⁰³ that doesn't affect the substance of the thing.

Same Student: But what²⁰⁴ would [Kant] say to²⁰⁵ [the charge that] what he's done in the moral realm is to apply a form, a very subtle and rather limited form, of intellectual intuition, because—?

LS: No, that he would deny. That it is not strictly speaking²⁰⁶ intuition; it is pure reason without intuition.²⁰⁷ Kant starts in his analysis, as we have seen, from the common moral understanding.²⁰⁸

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: And he asserts that in all ordinary understanding and judgment there is presupposed a law, a duty; and if one tries to make clear what this duty and what this law is, then we see it is the law of pure reason and that its formula is the categorical imperative.²⁰⁹ Our *knowledge* of what is, ²¹⁰according to Kant, [is] in no way increased except in a negative way, insofar as awareness of morality protects us against the dogmatism of experience. Well, we have seen some very practical examples. Men say: This is impossible because men are²¹¹ by nature of this and this kind, and they will never²¹² act²¹³ in the way in²¹⁴ which you presuppose, etc. And Kant says you cannot know; this is a dogmatic assertion about men's possibilities, an assertion based only on how men have behaved hitherto or of how men who you happen to know have behaved in that way. You cannot draw any conclusion from this as to what man is capable of, and [is] in general is capable of. To that extent,²¹⁵ the categorical imperative acts as a corrective of empirical knowledge of man.

But apart from that, the categorical imperative doesn't tell us anything as to what *is*. It tells us only how we ought to act. The world beyond the sensible phenomenal world is completely dark. There is only one glimmer of light and, if you want, you can say of light beams. And that is the categorical imperative.

Same Student: Does he use a different word when he is talking about this knowledge of the moral law²¹⁶ as opposed to knowledge which you get empirically? Is there a different word or is it just a different sense of—

LS: No, and Kant—

Same Student: what you know. Because you clearly know how you ought to act, because this is given—

LS: Ya.

Same Student: through reason.

LS: Well, you see, I will give you a partial answer. Traditionally, people since Aristotle at least distinguished between theoretical and practical reason. And then, as far as practical reason was concerned, there was the great question: How is it related to will or to desire²¹⁷ as Aristotle understands it? Kant says practical reason and will are identical. And that makes clear how little cognitive practical reason is. Practical reason is the same as the good will,²¹⁸ which means of course that²¹⁹ it includes this awareness of the law. But²²⁰ quite a few things follow from it, that is, if you call this knowledge of cause. Kant could therefore write a system of ethics called *The Metaphysics of Morals*. To that extent, there is knowledge. But²²¹ the system is not such an interesting problem, because these are only consequences from the categorical imperative.

Same Student: And in that case, you could, as part of the consequences—freedom, the immortality of the soul—

LS: Ya. No, no. The immortality of the soul is a postulate.²²² I mean, the immortality of the soul or the existence of God are assertions as to the “is,”²²³ whereas, for example, the character of a good society—say, a just society, or the right character of marriage, or whatever—these are not “is” assertions, but “ought” assertions.

Same Student: These are the virtues, in other words, which are the consequences of—

LS: Ya, whereas the postulates are assertions regarding the “is” that are implied in or follow from the categorical imperative.

Same Student: Could you say that he has supplied another form of the ontological argument in the practical—?

LS: No. No. No, no.²²⁴ Kant rejects that unqualifiedly, with a well-known formula: there is a radical gulf between 300 imagined dollars and 300 real dollars. And the categorical imperative [LS chuckles] seems to assert there is no difference. Mr. . . . ?

Student: . . . it’s really the same question, about the project and status of practical reason. Does Kant ever talk about the noumenal man as a free being, you know him as *noumenon*?

LS: Well,²²⁵ yes.²²⁶ Let me put it this way: you have no positive knowledge, but you know surely that man is not exhausted by what you know of him as a phenomenal being. But that is clear. I mean, in other words, this qualification of empirical knowledge as not exhaustive, that is surely knowledge. The rejection of the dogmatism of the practitioner, you know? The man of affairs who says: I know men and you professors don’t know. You know? That is clear. That follows.²²⁷

But, for example, if you say “a phenomenal being,²²⁸ a noumenal being belonging to the noumenal world,” what does that mean? Life after death? That you do not know. That you do not know. To that extent you do not know man as a noumenal being. But²²⁹ you

only postulate that. But you know that man is not exhausted by what you know of him phenomenally, either as far as the species man is concerned or even as regards the individual. You know, there are layers. You can say you know a man through and through, and there can always be surprises. There are four short stories by Somerset Maugham which exemplify that simply. How does it—*Quartet*, is that the title?^{xiii} Where he shows two nice gentlemen, I think that is the situation, who in a crucial moment prove to be not so nice, and two very wicked men, who in the decisive movement reveal something sublime which no one would have expected. That is²³⁰ as far as individual is concerned.

Student: . . . I wonder if when one says that one can know or understand, somehow one is aware of man as being in the noumenal world or, rather, when you use the word *noumenon* in connection with practical philosophy in Kant, does it have any different meaning from what it has when you use it his theoretical philosophy?

LS: Ya. Yes, because²³¹ in the theoretical philosophy it has a purely critical meaning—you know,²³² putting limits to experience.²³³ In the moral, political philosophy he does have a positive meaning. Let me see, where did he speak of it? In *Perpetual Peace* or where it was—

Mr. Reinken: *Respublica noumenon* . . .

LS: Ya, a *noumenon*. In other words,²³⁴ the idea or ideal of the commonwealth, as distinguished from anything which the empirical political scientists could observe.

Same Student: Yeah, you see, why I'm surprised is that²³⁵ he certainly knew some Greek, and he knew that it means an object intellectual—

LS: Ya, sure.

Same Student: And one would wonder why he didn't use another word.

LS: He used another word in the Latin dissertation of 1770: *mundus intelligibilis*. That is the Latin . . . But²³⁶ I think since he had to use the word “phenomenal,”²³⁷ was better than “sensual” for his purposes than “phenomenal.” He shows the corresponding adjective regarding the opposite, i.e., “noumenal.”

Mr. Reinken: . . . enormous joke²³⁸ that he should use “intelligible” for that word, when his point—

LS: Ya, sure.

Mr. Reinken: That points seems to be—

^{xiii} *Quartet* (1948) is a film based on four of Maugham's short stories.

LS: No, that is true. In German it would have been a bit awkward to call what is really not accessible at all, “the intelligible.” Now this, I’m sorry,²³⁹ this will be the last question.

Student: Very sorry. As you said, even²⁴⁰ in his theoretical philosophy²⁴¹ he gives a function to the *noumenon*. He says that it limits knowledge to . . .

LS: Ya.

Same Student: But do you think²⁴² he’s still thinking that he wants to maintain the basis for a practical philosophy?²⁴³ Because I don’t really see that for theoretical philosophy he really needs it. He uses it, but he doesn’t—

LS: Oh, he needs it in order to make clear that the limitation of our knowledge. I mean, that, I think, is crucial for Kant.

Same Student: But couldn’t he have given . . . limit as—

LS: I do not know.

Same Student: an infinite and indefinite, you know, something which—

LS: Kant had to make clear that all our knowledge, theoretical knowledge, is empirical or at least related to empirical knowledge as its condition. And this has to be seen against the possibility of a wholly adequate knowledge of the things we know, a knowledge which God would possess. And therefore, it was necessary to . . .

Same Student: Is there a proof of the *noumenon* in his two . . . or is practical use of the *noumenon* proved, or, as far as he suggests—?

LS: Well,²⁴⁴ the proof which he gives²⁴⁵—I mean, at least which I think [is] the most serious one, is the antinomies.²⁴⁶ Here reason must both assert and deny, say, the finiteness and the infinity,²⁴⁷ temporal as well as spatial, of the world. So we are at our wit’s ends. And yet the great question [LS taps on the table] is a reasonable question, and therefore this essential limitation of our reason can be made clear best by making the distinction between noumenal and phenomenal . . .

I am sorry, I have to stop at this point.

¹ Deleted “let us . . .”

² Deleted “what relation he . . .”

³ Deleted “I mean and the .”

⁴ Deleted “to his . . .”

⁵ Deleted “he had . . . no, he . . .”

⁶ Deleted “this is a . . .”

⁷ Deleted “even . . . when you take.”

⁸ Deleted “is . . . the book . . .”

⁹ Deleted “This, I don’t think . . .”

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- ¹⁰ Deleted "it was the...."
¹¹ Deleted "it under the more...."
¹² Deleted "where in...whenever...."
¹³ Deleted "he is...."
¹⁴ Deleted "that Kant...Kant's...."
¹⁵ Deleted "As...."
¹⁶ Deleted "must...should not...."
¹⁷ Deleted "these men...."
¹⁸ Deleted "in number...."
¹⁹ Deleted "who were...."
²⁰ Deleted "without...and...and to...quite...."
²¹ Deleted "where...."
²² Deleted "as little...."
²³ Deleted "And then you...."
²⁴ Deleted "Rousseau's case is...."
²⁵ Deleted "is...."
²⁶ Deleted "One would have...."
²⁷ Deleted "That."
²⁸ Deleted "So, that...."
²⁹ Deleted "As...."
³⁰ Deleted "so we...."
³¹ Deleted "one cannot read...and there is no...."
³² Deleted "things...."
³³ Deleted "for Kant this point...."
³⁴ Deleted "which is not...."
³⁵ Deleted "He...he made this...."
³⁶ Deleted "has...."
³⁷ Deleted "they acted upon...."
³⁸ Deleted "these are...."
³⁹ Deleted "in his...."
⁴⁰ Deleted "And in...."
⁴¹ Deleted "what he...."
⁴² Deleted "speak and write...are...."
⁴³ Deleted "Like...."
⁴⁴ Deleted "This is the...."
⁴⁵ Deleted "is not written by...."
⁴⁶ Deleted "Lessing did not...."
⁴⁷ Deleted "you...."
⁴⁸ Deleted "One can hardly...."
⁴⁹ Deleted "And now, one...."
⁵⁰ Deleted "he will surely be...."
⁵¹ Deleted "in...."
⁵² Deleted "only...this question...this fundamental question." Moved "fundamental."
⁵³ Deleted "is...."
⁵⁴ Deleted "it's...."
⁵⁵ Deleted "that they are...."
⁵⁶ Deleted "that is...."
⁵⁷ Deleted "that...man needed...."
⁵⁸ Deleted "nothing...nothing...."
⁵⁹ Deleted "quite...."
⁶⁰ Deleted "needs of...."
⁶¹ Deleted "this...."
⁶² Deleted "has something...."
⁶³ Deleted "So, this would lead...."
⁶⁴ Deleted "is not...not extinct...."

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- 65 Deleted “there could be no....”
 66 Deleted “as Kant in a sense....”
 67 Deleted “came....”
 68 Deleted “of....”
 69 Deleted “which....”
 70 Deleted “having....”
 71 Deleted “that’s not....”
 72 Deleted “why the....”
 73 Deleted “is very good....”
 74 Deleted “**Same Student:** In *Kant Studien*—”
 75 Deleted “the— **LS:** Yes. **Same Student:** from your....”
 76 Text has “*Kritique der Urteilkraft*.”
 77 Deleted “the question is, after all can....”
 78 Deleted “its greatest...weak of.”
 79 Deleted “history does not become....”
 80 Deleted “we can....”
 81 Deleted “to bring...is to have....”
 82 Deleted “of being....”
 83 Deleted “our....”
 84 Deleted “this is exactly....”
 85 Deleted “but....”
 86 Deleted “says....”
 87 Deleted “that is I think....”
 88 Deleted “in other....”
 89 Deleted “So, in other words, the French Revolution and its consequences are infinitely more....”
 90 Deleted “in....”
 91 Deleted “Kant is still....”
 92 Deleted “what....”
 93 Deleted “the....”
 94 Deleted “which....”
 95 Deleted “a....”
 96 Deleted “to....”
 97 Deleted “but there is....”
 98 Deleted “it....”
 99 Deleted “Nature....”
 100 Deleted “is....”
 101 Deleted “Trade....”
 102 Deleted “This of course...that....”
 103 Deleted “There could be....”
 104 Deleted “that...and that can only...to....”
 105 Deleted “be made....”
 106 Deleted “Which then is....”
 107 Deleted “as Kant could....”
 108 Deleted “and...the...the....”
 109 Deleted “**LS:** Yeah, no...I would like— **Same Student:** [inaudible words] to say.”
 110 Deleted “**Same Student:** [inaudible words] at the end. **Reinken:** ‘Thus...that in general practical philosophy...perhaps—’ **LS:** Yeah, that one. Now—”
 111 Deleted “very....”
 112 Deleted “in the....”
 113 Deleted “how to make...and see how such a....”
 114 Deleted “then you will....”
 115 Deleted “And in....”
 116 Deleted “This was then....”
 117 Deleted “Kant....”
 118 Deleted “which was not wholly...no...the first thing which Kant does.”

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- 119 Deleted "I...."
- 120 Deleted "makes this...."
- 121 Deleted "that he...."
- 122 Deleted "that is then...in a...."
- 123 Deleted "from...."
- 124 Deleted "now how can we...yes...and this is exactly...."
- 125 Deleted "fundamental and crucial...."
- 126 Deleted "takes the place of—pardon? **Student:** The right to what? **LS:** Freedom. That."
- 127 Deleted "As we have...."
- 128 Deleted "that"
- 129 Deleted "is."
- 130 Deleted "has ever...."
- 131 Deleted "having...."
- 132 Deleted "is...."
- 133 Deleted "whether...."
- 134 Deleted "defensive...defensive speech...."
- 135 Deleted "What the law does not command...."
- 136 Deleted "We are all...."
- 137 Deleted "one...."
- 138 Deleted "One can see...I have...."
- 139 Deleted "but."
- 140 Deleted "very important...."
- 141 Deleted "**Student:** Right here [inaudible words]. 'Though the unmoral ground [inaudible words] unmoral ground—' **LS:** I see. Is this the passage? Can I read it? Because I...just...acoustic. Did you...thank you...did you underline it? Which is the passage you mean? **Reinken:** What part of the page was it? **Student:** The first paragraph of the page."
- 142 Deleted "The...."
- 143 Deleted "is...."
- 144 Deleted "the passages...."
- 145 Deleted "let us take...or."
- 146 Deleted "So, now...but let us now...."
- 147 Deleted "it would be...."
- 148 Deleted "then quite a few...."
- 149 Deleted "that's not...."
- 150 Deleted "his...."
- 151 Deleted "he is the...."
- 152 Deleted "of...of...."
- 153 Deleted "some...."
- 154 Deleted "Although I do not remember...."
- 155 Deleted "The moralization...."
- 156 Deleted "maybe he doesn't...."
- 157 Deleted "a certain...."
- 158 Deleted "say...."
- 159 Deleted "This...."
- 160 Deleted "that there is no...."
- 161 Deleted "Whether Kant...."
- 162 Deleted "to say that we...."
- 163 Deleted "is...."
- 164 Deleted "there is one or...."
- 165 Deleted "there would be...then there would be...."
- 166 Deleted "be...."
- 167 Deleted "a...."
- 168 Deleted "I mean— **LS:** What Kant's? **Same Student:** What Kant's reply to Hegel might be."
- 169 Deleted "He was...I...."
- 170 Deleted "the individual...."

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- 171 Deleted "One can perhaps...I mean...you mean...."
- 172 Deleted "pure reason...."
- 173 Deleted "what...."
- 174 Deleted "is looking for...he."
- 175 Deleted "in...the...the thing...."
- 176 Deleted "disregards...."
- 177 Deleted "that...whose status...."
- 178 Deleted "Is this...."
- 179 Deleted "has discovered...has...."
- 180 Deleted "you would...."
- 181 Deleted "You mean...."
- 182 Deleted "that is...."
- 183 Deleted "That is...what in...what in...."
- 184 Deleted "That is...."
- 185 Deleted "the...."
- 186 Deleted "as Aristotle...."
- 187 Deleted "to what...."
- 188 Deleted "There is no...I mean it would...."
- 189 Deleted "into something...."
- 190 Deleted "is...is...."
- 191 Deleted "but a movement where...."
- 192 Deleted "the end is...."
- 193 Deleted "No I mean...but the...the point is this,."
- 194 Deleted "There is...."
- 195 Deleted "but it...."
- 196 Deleted "Mr. [inaudible word], I...you are Mr. [inaudible word]? You are Mr. [inaudible word]? No, I see."
- 197 Deleted "And T.H...."
- 198 Deleted "T.H. Green tried to...."
- 199 Deleted "this...."
- 200 Deleted "Is there...."
- 201 Deleted "the...."
- 202 Deleted "it always seems to be...."
- 203 Deleted "is...."
- 204 Deleted "would be the answer to the question...would...."
- 205 Deleted "Kant, you...what...."
- 206 Deleted "it cannot...is not."
- 207 Deleted "We come...."
- 208 Deleted "I mean, you know?"
- 209 Deleted "We...."
- 210 Moved "is."
- 211 Deleted "you know, they are not...men are."
- 212 Deleted "do it...."
- 213 Deleted "in...."
- 214 Deleted "which...."
- 215 Deleted "the moral imperative...."
- 216 Deleted "in...."
- 217 Deleted "to...."
- 218 Deleted "and...."
- 219 Deleted "it is aware...."
- 220 Deleted "everything else...."
- 221 Deleted "this...but this, as it were...this...that...."
- 222 Deleted "I mean the...you are not...."
- 223 Deleted "But these assertions...."
- 224 Deleted "That is...."

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- 225 Deleted "you know...."
226 Deleted "You know...."
227 Deleted "But you cannot...."
228 Deleted "a being belonging...."
229 Deleted "you know...."
230 Deleted "what...."
231 Deleted "it is...."
232 Deleted "that...."
233 Deleted "In the theoretical...in the...in the...."
234 Deleted "what...what...."
235 Deleted "the...."
236 Deleted "because...."
237 Deleted "was more...."
238 Deleted "LS: Pardon?"
239 Deleted "I must not...."
240 Deleted "in his...."
241 Deleted "he...he says...."
242 Deleted "still...."
243 Deleted "Isn't...."
244 Deleted "he says...well, the...."
245 Deleted "is the...."
246 Deleted "That...."
247 Deleted "of...."